REALITIES OF BHAGAVAD GITA



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BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN, BOMBAY-400 007

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Dedicated

To

My Mother

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PREFACE

I have made a humble attempt in this small book to explain the teachings of the Gita in as simple terms as possible; care has been taken to ensure that they do not lose anything in the process.

The teachings of the Gita are truths for all time though they may be capable of being expounded in different ways by different persons. I have made certain points which may appeal to the common man. Besides, he will know a great deal more easily for application of the teachings in the routine of his day-to-day life. What is particularly important, as the Gita obviously emphasises, is the need for realisation of the duties of man and his awakening from delusions by focussing his mind in the right direction, since it is essential that man should be free from ignorance which is the main source of likes and dislikes, spite and ill-feelings and consequent miseries. Once ignorance is dispelled, there is no scope for evil doings.

It is my firm conviction that moral teaching is a must and should never be ignored, with a view to achieving the best that God has offered us in such plenitude. In fact, the ways of providence in this respect lead to the healing and it is we who violate them. Human needs can be mended by reduction of wants which, it must be realised, are restricted to the material body which is subject to diseases and destruction. Then why not make the best use of the body and the mind to attain perfection, peace and

ultimate happiness? The body of one who has lived in luxury and then dies is never known to emit fragrance. It is as good as that of a beggar! Then why wallow in worldly pleasures? Let us therefore faithfully follow the teachings of the Gita and regulate our minds to be receptive to higher thinking.

Just as every civilised man should understand the problems of the body, so should he understand the problems of the mind and the soul. That can be achieved by remaining in constant touch with higher knowledge. The Gita offers plenty of knowledge in an interesting way. I have tried to be as clear and simple as possible in my attempt.

I have made an attempt to explain all the Sanskrit connotations in English and tried to make the work useful to all classes of people.

I must not fail to pray to God for His kindness in inspiring me to make this humble contribution. Let humanity prosper by the good grace of the Lord.

Hatkeshwar Lane,
Nagar Road,
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J. M. J.

PRELIMINARY NOTE

"For, whenever righteousness declines, O! Bharat, and wrong-doings tend to predominate, then I incarnate myself. For protecting the virtuous, for destroying the wicked, and for upholding righteousness, I am born from age to age."

(*Gita* — IV — 7, 8)

"He knows the Asvatha tree in the shape of creation, which is imperishable with its roots in the Supreme Being and the leaves of which are the Vedas. He who knows this is the real knower of the Vedas. The branches of this tree extend both downward and upward in the shape of desires binding the Soul according to its actions in this world."

(*Gita* — XV — 1, 2)

There is no space in this universe where the Supreme Being does not pervade. The Supreme Being is God, the Truthful. Truth is prevalent everywhere; and in the law of nature which is the source of Truth there is no breach just as the sun and the moon rise and set so regularly. The Supreme Being and the Truth pervade the entire universe for all the time which is endless and eternal. There will not be any moment in this eternal time that untruth will prevail and God will be absent. What appears as untruth is nothing but the process of prevalence of truth. All living beings have the atom of this supreme element in them and they are protected and animated by that supreme law.

Man is a creature of "Karma" (actions) lured by his mind in the great tree. The greater the force of lure, the lesser the realisation of the place of man in the supreme

being, resulting in loss of perspective of the law of karma and well-being. In its turn, this brings about sufferings and miseries — a kind of total loss of spiritual happiness. Karma is the process of cause and effect and it can never be imagined that the process has any breach. Though God is present everywhere, in the case of karma He is present not in the nature of a notional presence alone but He is present to see to it that the process of reward for karma is properly fulfilled. To talk of human beings, very few have the realisation that God is omnipotent and His rules of process have equality, truth, justice, benevolence, non-violence as the first principles with which karma is dealt. People pretend to have the realisation either by outward actions or religious beliefs but in reality there is pitiable absence of that realisation. No weightage is given even for the maximum type of outward pretence either by use of wealth or words. In fact, wealth or words or any such means are not at all necessary for a spiritual chain with God. On the contrary, their absence is necessary for the fulfilment. The higher the level of the soul, the nearer is the approach to God.

The law of nature is eternal and is never changeable in the eternity of time. So, God is one and eternal and prevalent in the remotest corner. There is no change to this. The eternity is truthful, benevolent, just and full of equality and non-violence. If deviations from these principles are visible in the nature, they are part of the whole, whose quality does not change. Moreover, the deviations are due to the karma which is to be subjected to the verdict of the invisible truth.

Time is eternal and in the process of the time, which we can visualise for our sake to be at least crores of years, the time which the man takes into account is only a thousand years or so at the maximum. Humanity seems to ignore the greatest hurdles of time and believes that what they do is of a permanent nature. The vagaries of time are discarded due to pride, infatuation, affluence, and so on. And in that thinking, devotion to God is forgotten. This limited vision of humanity does not ensure permanency

to what man does. Thus man is basically encircled by selfishness, pride, prejudices, attachments and the like; and he is more so when religion is at its ebb. By religion I do not mean worshipping a particular deity but what I mean is the noblest principles of equality and truth: and mostly devotion and dedication to God, in the real sense. Absence of that brings miseries and ruination.

So, what is the duty of man? The answer is —

(i) *To engage in work*:

To act on the conviction that the presence of God is continuous, eternal and all-pervading. One should always be engaged in work, even as the Creator is engaged in creating and maintaining this world.

(ii) *To believe in the law of karma*:

To believe in the law of karma (actions), the basis of which is that what is good for oneself is good for others too; and actions should be performed for the welfare of the world.

(iii) *To understand that time is eternal*:

To understand the eternal nature of time relative to the short scale on which man really bases his calculations.

(iv) *To rely on grace of God*:

Devotion to God who looks after the well-being of all. It is misleading to believe that man who is the smallest atom can do anything without His grace.

(v) *To abandon body-identification*:

To realise that the present human body is subject to decay; the ideas about honour, wealth, health, possessions, etc., are limited to that body only; there is no guarantee that there will be a similar position in the next birth when another body is assumed.

(vi) *To believe in nearness of God*:

To feel that if one is near to God, God will be near to him and will be at his beck and call.

(vii) *To believe in Avathars of God*:

It is natural to believe that the Supreme Spirit takes birth in this world when righteousness is on the wane and sins mount. This God in human form will make His existence felt. He will stem the tide of vice and re-enthrone justice. This incarnation takes place when people have suffered miseries and the virtuous have been tortured by the wicked. He will create order by enforcing the tenets of Dharma.

(viii) *To avoid sins and lead a godly life*:

Devotion to God cannot exist along with sins. Truthfulness leads to the good life; untruthfulness pollutes it, resulting in loss of peace and ultimate ruination. The greatest enemies of man are pride, prejudice, greed and infatuation, bringing misery in their trail. God is omnipotent, whereas man is too small and insignificant in the scale of the universe. Truth, and not untruth, shall prevail. Reward for the good and punishment for the bad are certain. They will affect the present life or the succeeding ones. It is for this reason that it is not possible at times to save a person who is heading towards destruction; since destruction is destined for him and is the effect of what he has done now or in the past.

Karma explains law of nature

The results of karma follow man, either in this life or in subsequent lives. Some deeds may not mature for reward in this life but may mature in later lives. The fact that one has attained sainthood in this life from childhood, results from what one has achieved in previous lives

by degrees. Similarly, the causes of affluence and afflictions may be difficult to know if we go by events in our present life. Thus birth and death are more or less physical issues and the soul finds its own level in all lives. Unless that is so, the law of nature stands unexplained. Thus deeds do mature and bring results in their turn. We cannot perceive the details because of our smallness, just as we are unable to see each and every stone on a mountain from a distance. What we see is only the scene in outline.

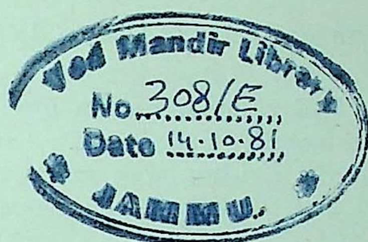
Devotion to God highest enjoyment

What is the highest enjoyment of life? Bodily pleasures are all transitory. The highest pleasure in life consists in devotion to God and all that follows from that devotion is God's grace (*prasada*).

Greatness of Arjuna, the devotee

Arjuna was thus the greatest devotee of Krishna who was clearly aware of this. It was thus that Lord Krishna was at the beck and call of Arjuna. When anyone as sublime as Lord Krishna is the wellwisher, who can equal Arjuna, the devotee, in his good fortune? To experience devotion to God is the greatest fortune one can ever achieve. The devotee does not cherish any other achievement. One of the devotees of Lord Krishna, Narsinh Mehta, was so greatly attached to God that he passed his entire life in devotion, and requested Him not to grant him salvation but to bestow upon him births after births so that he might serve Him. Apparently, the devotee was so happy in offering devotion during life that he felt that salvation might perhaps deprive him of his devotion to God. Devotion is the crowning message delivered to Arjuna by the Lord at the end of the Gita:

> "Leave all lesser Dharmas and submit to Me alone; I shall absolve you from all sins; do not be grief-stricken."
>
> (*Gita* — XVIII — 66)



INTRODUCTION

Gita: spirited dialogue embodied in sloka song

In the old days, knowledge was mostly imparted by word of mouth, the pupil asking questions and the preceptor answering them. The Gita is a treatise comprising questions which may be raised by laymen in difficulties, and of answers to them given convincingly. Like most treatises in Sanskrit, it is in verse, pleasant to read, sonorous to the ear and hence easy to remember. It is comparable to the catechism of the Christians.

Gita: call to action with faith in God

Karma is action. The Hindu idea is that God has bestowed upon man free will and that he should make the best use of it; the effects of action will pursue him even in later lives. But pre-destination is not everything; destiny is only a fifth constituent of action (Chapter XVIII). Many people believed at that time that action was of no use; the Lord refutes this idea. *Karma* is of two kinds: sacrifices and secular activities. The former do not generate reactions, but help maintain reciprocity with the Gods (forces of nature); the latter (other acts) if done without attachment lead to *mōksha* or emancipation, which is tantamount to *Brahmanirvāna,* absence of action or merging of the *ātman* (Soul or microcosm) into *paramātman* (Soul Supreme or macrocosm). The Gita is a call to action; but the doer should perform his duty, come what may, with full faith in God.

Krishna, Avatār of God, and Gita, God's message to the world

God assumes human form periodically to teach men true morality and action. The writer implicitly believes that Sri Krishna was an *avatāra* or incarnation of God, and that the Gita is His message to the world.

No man can renounce action

Renunciation (*sanyasa*) is of no use. No embodied soul can renounce action, from birth to death.

Krishna: eternal guru in yōga mudra

The Lord was in *yōga mudra* when delivering his message; hence for the teacher and the student, the time and place have no restriction. The Cosmic Form and His message might have flashed for a moment and then disappeared, while the two armies were itching for a fight. In the last chapter it is made clear that Vyasa explained the Lord's message to Sanjaya.

Krishna always appeared to Arjuna with four arms

Arjuna is a dedicated devotee; after seeing the Cosmic Form he prays to be shown Krishna's four-armed form which he might have worshipped (chapter XI). It may be assumed that Krishna appeared to all others with only two arms. The Lord when describing divinity in many things, conceptions and creatures, says that He is like the moon to the stars. We have come to know now the relative value of the moon to the stars. We may take it that prophets have to use the grammar, expression and comparisons with which the devotees are familiar; otherwise the message will not go home.

Gita: tolerant and reconciles different ideologies

The Gita reconciles different ideologies. Arjuna is advised not to create doubts in the minds of those who think differently. The worship of all Gods leads to the worship of the one true God. Similarly the paths of

knowledge, work and devotion are shown to be equally efficacious in reaching *mōksha.* This is in the best tradition of Indian culture, which is tolerant of other faiths.

Man should engage in Lokasangraha

The Lord gives a liberal interpretation to all noble effort in which men engage themselves with dedication. Hence imparting knowledge (*jnāna*), repeating the Lord's name (*japa*), concentration on God (*dhyāna*), work without attachment (*nishkama karma*) are declared to be sacrifices (*yajnās*). All good effort is service of God. Even God engages in work; great men follow God; and other men will follow great men; in short, example is better than precept. And with what aim in mind? It is for the welfare of the world (lokasangraha): surely an ideal that should appeal to the modern mind.

Gita: an Upanishads and a key to Upanishads

The Bhagavad Gita is the song of Bhagavan, the Lord. It claims to be the *upanishads* and a branch of *yōgashastra,* (which is union with the divine by mental and physical discipline) and of the *Brahmavidya* (or the knowledge of the Brahman). It is the writer's hope that after going through this treatise, the reader will delve deeper into the *Upanishads.* They deal with different aspects of the Brahman. They are the precious legacies left by the sages and sage-like kings who dared to think differently from the priests engaged in sacerdotal sacrifices. *A constructive survey of Upanishadic Philosophy* by the late Dr. Ranade, reprinted by the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, will be of great help to the person who wants to understand the *Upanishads,* at the source.

Seventeen Realities of the Gita

I shall conclude by pin-pointing the main realities I have found in the Gita, which I wish to share with the reader.

(1) Man is responsible for his actions. He is a mixture of good and evil impulses. He should, by incessant practice (*yōga*) control these impulses and lead a good active life. No effort is ever lost, like a broken piece of cloud. The effect of actions spills over into the next and even subsequent lives. Therefore man should exercise the free will granted by the Lord.

(2) What is the aim of life? It is *mōksha* or emancipation. The Vedas recommend sacrifices, but the Gita says that their performance will lead only to heaven. The sacrificer will return to earth again and again. The higher ideal is to live with God (merge in him) with the help of the various disciplines (*yōgas*). Some are mentioned below.

(3) First we must have discrimination through knowledge (*buddhi*). Proper action will follow proper knowledge. That is why the teaching begins with Sankhya Yōga, the discipline of knowledge. The disciple should ultimately preach this message of the Gita, as he is advised to do in the last chapter.

(4) The discipline of Action or *Karma* should be performed without regard for results, for the welfare of the world.

(5) The discipline of Devotion or Bhakti. This can be equated with the love preached in the New Testament. It is the worship of a personal God. One should also see God in all beings. This Bhakti cult was later to spread over the whole of India.

(6) The discipline of yōga by concentration or *dhyāna*. Now in common parlance, this is limited to breath control, hard penance, exercise of the limbs to obtain complete control over the organs. The *dhyāna yōga* is suggested in chapters VI and VIII. It is only by severe practice that yogis can live without food, water, or air for long periods, by saving on calories, like some animals wintering near the North Pole. Meditation should be undertaken in a lonely place, free from sounds, seated comfort-

ably, so as not to cause morbid distractions like claustrophobia. This practice of yōga enables a person later on to leave this life with ease, thinking on God.

(7) Litany, or chanting of words like "Om tat sat". This is also called a sacrifice (*japayajna*) which is described as unequalled. Such kinds of worship are superior to those performed with material things.

(8) The Gita is a synthesis of previous teachings and is very modern in outlook, though yōga is said to be as old as creation itself (chapter IV). All roads lead to God.

(9) Toleration is stressed to such an extent that the devotee is asked not to shake the faith of any person. After the sermon is over, even Arjuna is asked to accept or reject the teaching, as he thinks proper.

(10) Extremism in any form is to be deprecated; one should eat good food and not starve the body and the Lord residing within.

(11) Faith is the main motivation and man's actions are shaped by faith.

(12) One should not preach to those who do not believe. One is reminded of Christ's allegory of seeds falling on rock.

(13) The Lord's high regard for women, to whom he attributes good qualities like sweet speech, fortitude and forgiveness.

(14) His message is for all, including Vaishyas and Shudras, who were so long looked down upon. It is meant even for the worst sinners who accept the Lord; He says "They are on the right path and will slowly and surely be absolved after believing in the Lord and earning His love."

(15) The Highest goal is not heaven or good re-birth; it is *nirvāna* becoming like the Brahman, above the buffet-

ings of the world, desireless and unconcerned. It can be attained in this life. (II — 72 and XVIII — 53).

(16) The teaching is catholic. Many non-Indians became followers of the Bhagavan; they were called Bhagavatas.

(17) There are many other points, which the reader will suddenly chance upon, while chewing the cud. The versification by Vyasa is in simple Sanskrit which may be easily remembered by singing or chanting. Some points are like jewels, set in pithy sayings: "Yōga is expertise", "Faith makes the man", "Nothing more sacred than knowledge."

Finally, taking into consideration the setting — the battle of Kurukshetra as the battle of life — the preaching of the Lord is a call to action. It invigorates the dejected; it strengthens the faith; it enlarges the vision and finally gives solace to the dying. It is a compendium of moral and spiritual teaching. The different commentaries by the great teachers (*acharyas*) emphasised one or more aspects of the Gita.

CHAPTER I

ARJUNA'S GRIEF

Kurukshetra war inevitable — Arjuna overwhelmed by pity and grief — Arguments of Arjuna — Arjuna in deep depression.

Kurukshetra war inevitable

The battle of Kurukshetra between the cousins, Kauravas and Pandavas was caused by the arrogance of the Kaurava prince, Duryodhana. The Kauravas, in their pride of power, failed to reckon with the prowess of Lord Krishna. Even the Kaurava elders failed to dissuade them from fighting. Lord Krishna was fully aware of the inevitable consequences of this fratricidal war and tired to avert it. Failing, he left them to suffer the results of their actions (*Karma*) on the battlefield.

Duryodhana reckons without God Krishna

This chapter opens with the rival armies facing each other in Kurukshetra. Duryodhana is confident of victory, depending on his expert knowledge of warfare, his brave generals and warriors, and his vast army. He makes a survey of the battle array, compares his army with that of the Pandavas and concludes that it is easy to conquer the latter, as it is smaller than his own. Duryodhana forgets that Arjuna's charioteer Krishna inspires and guides the Pandavas and would lead them to victory.

Arjuna overwhelmed by pity and grief

Both the armies prepare for the battle by blowing on conches. At this crucial moment, Arjuna requests Krishna to place his chariot in the midst of both armies, so that he may have a look at the warriors, who are prepared to lay down their lives for the main contenders. Krishna complies, and Arjuna sees his hoary grandfather, revered preceptor and other near and dear relatives arrayed against him. It is certain that he will shed their blood. He experiences great sorrow at the idea if fighting against his own kith and kin. This brings out the better part of his nature. He tells Krishna, "I covet no victory, kingdom, riches of pleasures. I do not want to kill them, though they kill me". It is no wonder his nobility endeared him to the Lord; God condescends to do any job for the devotee. At that time, he is not only the charioteer, but the war counsellor; hence Arjuna turns to him in his moment of depression.

Arguments of Arjuna

Arjuna urges Krishna that they should ignore the greed of the Kauravas; he clearly sees the sin involved in the destruction of the Kuru tribe, of which the Pandavas are a part. Ultimately, agelong family traditions will disappear, domestic virtues yielding place to vices. With the destruction of the fighting males, the widows will become corrupt. He deplores that greed of kingdom has led to this crime. He prefers to be killed by the armed Kauravas — unprotected and unarmed. He lays down the arms and sits down stricken with grief in his chariot.

Arjuna in deep depression

This chapter reveals the real nature of Arjuna as opposed to that of Duryodhana. Arjuna is aware of his cousin's wickedness, yet does not seek vengeance. He is prepared to suffer, rather than make others suffer. He is in deep depression.

CHAPTER II

THE YOGA (PATH) OF KNOWLEDGE

Arjuna takes refuge in Krishna as Guru — Upadesa of Krishna — Atman or self is Immortal — What cannot be avoided must be endured — Do not be stigmatised as a coward — Your right extends to performance of Duty, not to fruits thereof — Go beyond the Karma Kanda to the Jnana Kanda — Karma Kanda of the Vedas bind man — Secret of Karma yoga — Summary of teaching — Lakshana of a Sthitha Prajna — The Chain of Karma and its links — Brahma Nirvana or the Peace that is God — Summary of Chapter.

Arjuna takes refuge in Krishna as Guru

Arjuna was a Kshatriya and the Lord, Krishna, was surprised to see how unmanly and fainthearted he had become at this crisis. Arjuna asks how he can fight Drona and Bhishma who are fit for worship. He feels it is better to live on alms rather than kill kinsmen and revered elders; by killing them, they would only enjoy bloodstained wealth and pleasures. War is a gamble; no one knows whether they will win or the Kauravas. Life would not be worth living after killing his cousins. This is the dilemma: to fight or not to fight Arjuna's willpower is undermined. He surrenders to the Lord and importunes,

"I am your disciple; tell me what is decidedly good; advise me; I have sought refuge in you. Even unrivalled sovereignty over this wide world and over the gods would not compensate the loss of mental peace. I do not see anything that will allay my agony." Refusing to fight, Arjuna lapsed into silence.

Upadesa of Krishna

The Lord laughs at this attitude and advises him as follows:—

Atman or Self is Immortal

"You speak like a wise man; yet, you grieve over those for whom you should not grieve. The learned do not lament the living or the dead. There never was a time when I, you or these kings did not exist; nor will they ever cease to be. The body dies; the soul does not. The embodied soul experiences childhood, youth and old age. In like manner, it casts off one body and assumes another, just as one rejects old clothes. From this it can be inferred that the present material body is only incidental and that there is a continual process of life and death. One's deeds (*karmas*) play a decisive role in the next birth (see chapter VI). So those who appear to you as kith and kin are not so in reality. It is the senses in contact with the objects that give rise to pleasure or pain; they needs must be endured. One who is not affected by pleasures or pain is truly wise; such a one qualifies for immortality. The unreal does not exist; nor does the real ever cease to be. Only the sages have realised this truth. None can destroy the imperishable soul, which in essence is the presiding personality in man. When you kill, only the material body will be destroyed. The soul neither kills nor is killed. It is eternal and does not perish with the body. Hence how can one think that he who kills the body kills the soul? The soul is so perfect that it cannot be cut, burnt, wetted or dried; it is unchanging and invulnerable. Our sense organs are incapable of comprehending it."

What cannot be avoided must be endured

The Lord then takes up another line of argument. Even if the soul is perishable, births and deaths take place daily. One who is born is sure to die. Hence death does not merit grief. With regard to living beings, it is not known from whence they come and where they go; they are visible only in their middle stage. Then why grieve over the incomprehensible?

Do not be stigmatized as a coward

After this disquisition about the immortality of the soul and the impermanence of the mortal coil, the Lord strikes a personal note. He reminds Arjuna of his duties as a warrior (*Kshatriya*). What would the world think of this veteran fighter, who shies at this battle and deserts the field? There could be no greater shame than to be stigmatized as a coward for one with a full record of brave deeds. "Do or Die; Success leads to a kingdom, death to paradise; be indifferent to success or failure, gain or loss; there is no sin in fighting evil".

Your right extends to performance of Duty, not to fruits thereof

With verse 30 begins the philosophical part of the Gita, which only ends with the last chapter of the book. The Lord explains here *Sankhya Yoga*, equating it with discrimination (*buddhi*). At the same time, He takes care to balance knowledge with action, action with devotion, ever emphasising that one should never hanker after the fruits of labour. The famous line occurs here; frequent repetitions has not dulled the edge of the message. "You have only the right to the performance of duty; not to the fruits thereof." This spells out complete dedication, faith in God, and non-attachment. Performance of rightful duty frees man of all fears; even a bit of righteous action suffices; that duty should be in consonance with one's aptitude; death is preferable while engaged in one's duty. This duty is called *swadharma*.

Go beyond the Karma Kanda to the Jnana Kanda

The Lord now roundly denounces the hypocrisy of those who always swear by the Vedas, engage in unending disputations, and dare to assert that there is nothing else that is worthwhile. It is a bold and revolutionary theory which teaches that the *Yoga Shastra* goes beyond the Karma Kanda of the Vedas; the ultimate goal is not heaven but merging in the Supreme.

Karma Kandas of the Vedas bind man

The Vedas teach us how to acquire the pleasures of paradise. They are based on the three attributes (*gunas*) of Satwa, Rajas and Tamas or purity, energy and ignorance. They bind man, who should be above them; he should abide in truth, possessing his own soul, in spite of worldly allurements. To one, who has attained enlightenment, the Karma Kanda of the Vedas are as useful as a small tank, surrounded by flooded water on all sides.

Secret of Karma Yoga

Work done skilfully is verily yoga. This is explained by the Lord's insistence on single minded devotion to duty, ignoring consequences. The result is peace. Attachment breeds a sense of smugness which engenders egoism. The attainment of self realisation (*yoga*) hinges on mental poise, which comes to a man who is not tossed about by conflict of opinions, by heat or cold, pleasure or pain.

Summary of teaching

The Lord's advice can be summarised as follows:—

(1) There is an eternal law transcending the material body;

(2) that truth prevails, whatever be the personal predilections;

(3) that fruits of actions may not be in keeping with one's desires, as they are meted out according to eternal laws;

(4) that one should constantly guard against frequent temptations of worldly allurements stemming from attachment;

(5) that what is good for one's self is also good for others.

Lakshana of a Sthitha Prajna

Arjuna asks, "What is the mark of the man who is endowed with a stable mind, full of peace? How does he speak, sit and talk?"

Arjuna knows that a great man is great even in small things. The Lord replies, "When a man abandons entirely all cravings of the mind and is satisfied in the self through the joy of the self, then he has a stable mind, full of wisdom. In fact the joy of the self is the real joy and no other pleasures equal that joy. Other joys are materialistic; they are rooted in the shortlived pleasures of the body. Consequently, he who remains unperturbed in joy and sorrow, is devoid of longings, and is free from passions, fears and angers, is really a sage full of wisdom. He has attained equanimity. He knows what is ultimate happiness. He has a steady mind because he is always free from attachments and never rejoices nor hates, when he faces anything good or bad. He takes on all occurences in his stride, as willed by God, as if they come in the normal course. Such a man withdraws all his sense-organs from all objects, like the tortoise withdrawing its limb in its shell. When the Supreme is seen, there is total disappearance of feelings for sense-objects. All the taste for wordly objects disappears.

Man's senses are so violent, that they are capable of carrying away even the mind of a wise man engaged in spiritual discipline." The Lord advises that in the circumstances, the best course is to concentrate in Him.

The Chain of Karma and its limbs

But when a man thinks always on sense objects, he comes to have attachment for them. Then desires are

born of that attachment and as they cannot be fulfilled in full, anger is generated; the slightest wavering will bring about a fall; for, from anger is generated delusion, from delusion, failure of memory; from confused memory, loss of reason; and when reason is lost there is complete ruination. A man of disciplined mind, even while enjoying sense objects, but is free from likes and dislikes, attains serenity and peace full of joy. One who has attained such tranquility bids adieu to all sorrows. He becomes wise. One who has not controlled his mind cannot have discrimination. He has no faith in God and consequently no peace of mind or happiness. So what is absolutely necessary is faith in God, control over the mind and the senses which can bring peace and happiness. When the senses ride the mind, they carry away his discrimination, like a gale tossing a rudderless barge away from the goal. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary that discrimination should guide the senses.

Brahma Nirvana or the Peace that is God

What is night to all beings is day for a man of wisdom; he keeps awake. When all beings are awake, the sage has his night. Men, by and large, are guided by sense yearnings; the wise are few and far between. The riddle is meant to bring home the truth that man of wisdom is not on the same wave length as others; he is on the spiritual plane, while others are on the mundane plane. The one acts on what is right; others follow what is wrong and perverse. Just as the waters of the river do not affect the level of the ocean, desires do not affect the man who has attained peace, by control of the mind. He has no thirst for enjoyment for worldly goods. Attachment to pleasures of the body gives rise to pride and prejudice and loss of faith in the Almighty. Do your duty; do not crave for reward; it is sure to follow. Brahmanirvana will be realised; it is "peace that passeth all understanding"; it is divine, it is superior to mundane things; it is bliss supreme.

Summary of Chapter

This chapter describes the anguish of Arjuna, who refuses to fight. The Lord explains that to fight in order to undo wrongs is the duty of a Kshatriya. Death does not betoken the end of the soul; the soul is immortal and life is continuous. *Buddhi* or discrimination between the real and the unreal, between duty and enjoyment, between poise and unsettled emotions, is enjoined in this chapter, which is appropriately called *Sankhya Yoga* or the practice of unity with God through knowledge. The Vedas enjoin sacrifices for attaining heaven, but the knowledge which takes a man beyond the three attributes of nature will lead him to merge in God (*Brahman*). But the Lord never forgets to point out that this *Yoga* should lead to skill in workmanship in daily life. In subsequent chapters, the Lord never fails to maintain the balance between theory and practice, between knowledge and work, between devotion and duty.

CHAPTER III

THE YOGA OF ACTION

Arjuna's doubt — The two paths of Karma and Jnana — The chakra or wheel of sacrifice — Janaka and others engaged in work to set an example — The wise should not create doubts in the minds of the ignorant — Nature impels man to Satva, Rajas and Tamas — Perform Karma Yoga or have faith in it — Svadharma is always preferable Parabrahma is fraught with danger — Why do men sin? Due to infatuation of greed and wrath — Sadhana of means of control through Purusha Vidya or realisation that one is the divine Purusha — Summary of Chapter.

Arjuna's doubt

Arjuna raises a doubt and asks the Lord why if steadfast wisdom (as explained in chapter II) is held by Him as superior to action, he is being advised to engage in the horrible work of fighting. He is, therefore, bewildered and wants to get his doubts cleared, so that he can secure the highest good.

The Two paths of Karma and Jnana

The Lord clarifies that the two fold way of life was propounded by him long ago — that of knowledge for men

of contemplation and that of work for men of action. Both are complementary for self-fulfilment. None can ever achieve the stage of the "non action" part (freedom from action) by avoiding work and the stage of perfection by renunciation. Action is duty leading to perfection and salvation. In fact, none can remain without work even for a moment; one is driven to do some work by natural qualities. He who restrains his impulses of action and sits brooding over objects of senses is verily a hypocrite, deluding himself. What is necessary is to work without attachment in the mind to the fruits of labour. Knowledge is necessary for action; action is necessary for perfection. Discrimination is paramount and must guide actions which are essential. The result will be knowledge-oriented duty. Duty bereft of knowledge is no duty because it is led by pride and selfishness.

The Chakra or Wheel of Sacrifice

The Lord then advised Arjuna to perform the work he is bound to do; this is also necessary to keep the body going. In this world, all action is followed by effects. Work is of two kinds: sacrifice, whose effects do not bind men; other work, whose results follow men. By giving up attachment, work can be done as a sacrifice. The creator created men in a spirit of sacrifice and they multiplied to achieve the fruits of that divine sacrifice. This is as if the fruits were bestowed by the gods for enjoyment. He who is not grateful to the gods for these blessings, and does not sacrifice to them is like a thief. Good men partake of the remnants of sacrifices (*prasada*) and are freed from sins; those who are selfish consume nature's gifts, without a thought of cooperating with the gods in turning the wheel of prayer and production, production and consumption. This cycle of sacrifice brings in its wake rains and then food. Therefore, sacrifice is enjoined in the Vedas, which come from God. One who does not follow the wheel of *Karma* (action) with this knowledge lives in vain.

Janaka and others engaged in works to set an example

After explaining the necessity of these actions for maintenance of the self, as a matter of duty, the Lord recommends complete self abnegation which leads to independence; hence the spiritual aspirant should always engage in obligatory action without attachment. All great men like Janaka attained perfection by action for the guidance of other men; hence one should become great by working. Ordinary men imitate great men. Thus world order is maintained and public welfare ensured.

The Wise should not create doubts in the minds of the ignorant

Here, the Lord makes an important point that a man while engaged in work should be content with the self alone and rejoice in the self; he is no longer dependent; he has fulfilled himself; he has left nothing undone; he has no further obligatory duties. He rejoices at the grandeur of the Supreme Being, His predominance and His presence all-around. Such a man has no burdens and if there be any, he takes them as coming from God. This cannot ensue without complete sincerity, innocence and full faith in the Almighty. All work should be done without attachment, for the maintenance, welfare and guidance of the world. The Lord says that even He himself continues to work, even though He has nothing to achieve in the three worlds. If He is not continuously engaged in work, human beings will imitate Him and as a result, there will be stoppage of work ending in anarchy. Then people will perish. Just as ignorant people work by attachment, the enlightened should work without attachment; the latter are thus guiding the world. Wise men should guide them by setting an example. Deeds, not words, will be more effective.

Nature impels man to Sattva Rajas Tamas

Nature demands activity from every creature born. This Nature has three attributes of Sattva Rajas Tamas —

goodness, activity and ignorance; these propel man to action. But the egoist prides himself on his achievements.

Perform Karma Yoga or have faith in it

The Lord, therefore, tells Arjuna: "Dedicating all actions to me, with your mind fixed on the self, freed from all hopes of fruit, attachment and mental grief, prepare yourself for the battle (of life). Those, who without evil thought, follow this precept of Mine are freed from all binding effects of action. Even those who follow this precept with faith alone are similarly emancipated." The Lord thus, in effect, declares that even faith will motivate a person to action.

Svadharma is always preferable, Paradharma is fraught with danger

Every man is born with some inherent qualities. While choosing his avocation a man should follow this natural bent of mind. This is *svadharma* or duty (III.33, IV.13, XVIII.60). This duty may at times seem unprofitable or unpleasant, and another's duty (*paradharma*) more pleasant. But only the inherent impulses will guide properly and get expressed in action. As senses are all guided by likes and dislikes, one should not be subordinate to them; they are hindrances. Even death in the performance of one's duty is preferable to following some one else's, as it is fraught with danger. Doing one's duty in the right manner is real religion.

Why do man sin? Due to infatuation of greed and wrath

Arjuna still doubts as to why a person not inclined to sin, is driven to commit it; and asks, "What is the driving force?"

The Lord explains that it is infatuation which manifests itself to greed and wrath and actuates man to commit sin. "Take it to be the enemy. Just as fire is enveloped by smoke, a mirror by dirt, and an unborn babe by the womb, so is knowledge covered by infatuation. This

infatuation can never be satisfied and so constitutes an inveterate enemy. Even the knowledge of the wise is enveloped by it. Senses mind and intellect are the abode of this infatuation, which deludes the embodied soul. Therefore, this infatuation should be eliminated by controlling the senses."

Sadhana or means of control through Purusha Vidya or realisation that one is the divine Purusha

Senses are said to be greater than the body; greater than the senses is the mind; greater than the mind is the intellect; and still greater is the *atman* or the soul. Then why the ignorance? Because, the senses are the captives of infatuation. Therefore, really know the soul as being above the intellect (*Buddhi* or discrimination), control the mind by the intellect and slay the enemy in the form of infatuation. This Purusha Vidya is inculcated in the Kathavalli Upanishad 1-3-10 to 13 and the Gita III, 42, 43.

Summary of Chapter

In this chapter on *Karmayoga,* the Lord says that both the *Sankhya* and *Karma* disciplines are equal in merit. None can escape action, from the moment he is born. Every action has a reaction and man is fully responsible for the results of his actions; only those actions connected with sacrifice do not leave any imprint. Then why perform sacrifices? It is for maintaining the balance of nature, to get rain, from rain food, and so to play the part of a cog in the cosmic wheel of life. Apart from this sacredotal *Karma* there is secular *Karma* or duty, which man is bound to perform. He should work with world welfare in view. And he should work free from all misconceptions and delusions. The ultimate goal is Atman, the Lord within.

CHAPTER IV

THE YOGA OF DIVINE KNOWLEDGE

Krishna states that He taught the Sungod and Arjuna's doubt thereon — Krishna declares the mystery of the Avataras of God — Belief in Avataras will purify — God responds in the ways men approach Him — Castes based on inherent qualities and work done by man — Mystery of Karma — Meaning of "Sacrifice" extended — Jnana is fulfilment of Karma and leads to Brahman — Summary of Chapter.

Krishna states that He taught the Sungod and Arjuna's doubt thereon

The *Yoga* of enlightenment is eternal; it lay dormant for ages, forgotten by humanity. The Lord informs Arjuna that he is preparing it after aeons have passed because the latter is His devotee and friend. The Lord tells Arjuna that He had first taught this *yoga* to Vivasvat (the Sun-god). Arjuna raises a doubt and wants to be enlightened as to how, when the Lord was born after the birth of Vivasvat, He could teach Vivasvat who was born long before Him.

Krishna declares the mystery of the Avataras (birth) of God

The Lord clarifies that both He and Arjuna had several births, which fact He knows, but Arjuna does not. The

Lord explains that though unborn, immortal and the ruler of all beings, He manifests Himself through His divine potency (*maya*), keeping His nature (*prakriti*) under control. Here *maya* means delusion, since the Lord deludes people into believing Him as one of themselves; when He keeps His *prakriti* under control, the Lord does not follow the rules of nature, since he has to perform miracles which are superhuman. Whenever righteousness declines and injustice prospers, He incarnates Himself for protecting the virtuous and destroying the wicked and upholding righteousness (*dharma*). Decadence of morality and the rise of sinfulness lead to destruction. Then it is that God manifests Himself, time and again to undo wrongs, and enthrone justice. Though truth remains latent for a time, it is bound to prevail in the long run. Great dynasties of tyrants have disappeared into the dust; their latest descendants would still have weilded power, but for divine intervention. Evil meets its doom sooner or later, though it apparently thrives for a time. Incarnation of God is necessary and unavoidable, in the circumstances.

Belief in Avataras will purify

The Lord further explains that one who knows the divine birth and work of the Almighty is not re-born. The devotee is always near Him. The meaning is that identification of godliness in human beings will lead to devotion, devotion to virtuous deeds and such deeds to emancipation. Many of those completely rid of passion, fear and anger have been wholly absorbed in Him being purified by knowledge.

God responds in the ways men approach Him

It is open for all to follow any path to approach God. "I render unto them in the way they pray unto me." By thus promising redemption, the Lord has acknowledged difference in worship and committed Himself to bestow His universal grace on all kinds of devotees attached to all kinds of gods. Those who work with desire for success

surely will obtain it in this world; those who want emancipation will get it in the next.

Castes based on inherent qualities and work done by man

To those who believe in the immutability of caste by birth, the Lord has given a shock. He says that the four castes were created on the basis of man's inherent qualities and the work done by him. Though He authored these divisions, He remains free from the results of these divisions, meaning thereby that these things are not eternal. God is ever free experimenting in new creations, free from the results of His actions. Only great men have realised this truth and devoted themselves to their duties.

Mystery of Karma

The Lord now explains the philosophy of *karma* or work. It is only true knowledge that leads to good deeds. The path of duty is intricate and difficult to discern. The wise man sees inaction in action, and action in inaction. This shows how necessary it is to have proper perspective of *karma.* The body remains active; the soul remains static, witnessing the action. This difference should be understood between physical action and spiritual knowledge or inaction. Selfish actions are infructuous; they are no better than inaction; actions which disdain returns are like inaction, and do not leave any taint behind. There is a time for work; there is a time for cessation of work; they also work, "who wait and pray." Therefore the Lord says that the meaning of *karma* is mysterious.

Meaning of "Sacrifice" extended

The Lord now expatiates on the meaning of *yajna* or sacrifice. He expands the meaning of sacrifice, which formerly was limited to fire sacrifice. All the materials and detailed functions of the fire sacrifice are Brahman or the invisible aspect of God. It is the divine presence that has filled the world. It informs all sacrifices and actions. The different sacrifices to different gods, yogic practices

of controlling different organs of the body, of *pranayama* or breath control, worship with material things or immaterial *dhyana* or concentration, by study, by penance, by self-denial, all lead to merging in God.

Jnana is fulfilment of Karma and leads to Brahman

But the sacrifice through knowledge is superior to sacrifice with material things. The ultimate end of all work is knowledge called experience, because practice maketh the man perfect. *Jnana* is thus the fulfilment of *karma*. This knowledge can be obtained through prayers, questionings and services rendered to those who know. True knowledge is that which sees the whole creation in yourself, yourself in creation and both in God. Knowledge is the bark which carries man through the waters of sin. It is the fire which reduces action to ashes, meaning thereby, to eternal peace, above and beyond this work-a-day world of "sweat, blood and tears." Only those perfect in *yoga,* deep in faith, riding over the senses, will acquire the true knowledge that leads quickly to the Peace Supreme, which is Brahman.

Summary of Chapter

This chapter ends with a heartening message of God's unseen presence, in all things of this world. There is no knowledge equal to this theosophy. This knowledge leads to renunciation, which in effect means action without attachment. That is why this chapter is called by some people "Renunciation of Action through Knowledge."

When God is realised all action ceases.

CHAPTER V

THE YOGA OF RENUNCIATION

Arjuna's question: Is performance of Karma better or its renunciation? Karma Yoga and Sanyasa Yoga practically one — Karma Yogi lives unaffected in the body with nine holes — God has nothing to do with Karma but Prakriti acts through Sattva Rajas Tamas — Brahman is Equanimity and devotees having Samadhristi are dear unto God — All actions should be oriented towards Sacrifices — Dhyana Yoga — Summary of Chapter.

Arjuna's question: Is performance of Karma better or its renunciation?

Arjuna questions: "Which is the better of the two, renunciation of actions or their performance, since you praise both of them?"

Karma Yoga and Sanyasa Yoga practically one

The Lord gives a practical answer. The disciplines of action (*karmayoga*) and of renunciation (*sanyasayoga*) both lead to supreme bliss. But the yoga of renunciation is difficult. Action without attachment is equal to renunciation. Action is a must. None can dispense with action, from birth to death. It is wrong to believe that one does

not act at all. Even thinking is an act of the mind. One who neither hates nor desires while still engaged in work has the real spirit of renunciation. Such a man is freed from all bondage. It is the ignorant and not the wise who believe that action and renunciation are different paths. If one is firmly established in either of the two disciplines, one attains fulfilment, the end of both *yogas*. The goal of renunciation and selfless action is the same; it is emancipation. He who sees both paths as one, really sees.

Karma Yogi lives unaffected in the body with nine holes

While working, it is hard to achieve renunciation of attachment. But a *karma yogi,* engaged in work can achieve it. He should have controlled his mind, conquered his senses; he should have a pure heart; he should look upon his soul as equal to all other souls; he should be free from attachments; then he will have achieved the supreme goal. He who has reached this stage, even if he sees, hears, touches, smells, eats, walks, sleeps, speaks, breathes, opens and closes his eyes always understands that the senses act according to their nature; he does not do anything of his own volition; the above are merely reflex actions; he is above all these processes. Such a person dedicates all actions to the Almighty. He is unaffected by attachment like a lotus leaf by water drops. Men of realisation do their work, with body, mind and intellect, without attchment, for the purification of their souls. The self-restrained man by renouncing the subjectiveness in all his actions lives in the city of nine gates, that is, the body with its nine senses, as if he is not doing and causing any doing.

God has nothing to do with Karma but Prakriti acts through Sattva Rajas Tamas

After the creation of the world, God does not provide work for man. Neither does he prompt him to work. He does not vouchsafe the fruits of labour. Nature works as it were automatically in keeping with its three inherent qualities (*gunas*). Man is responsible for his own actions

and will reap its results. God does not dole out reward or punishment. It is the ignorant who think so.

Brahman is Equanimity and devotees having Samadhrishti are dear unto God

Knowledge about God wipes out ignorance, just as the sun drives away darkness. Those whose minds are wholly merged in Him, those who experience oneness with Him, have their sins wiped out and are freed from the bonds of births and deaths. Sages of the type look with an equal eye upon a learned man, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a scavenger. A wise man looks upon all alike, because all are created by God and are equally subject to pain and pleasure. This man of equanimity has overcome the caprices of nature. *Brahman* is flawless and looks with equal eye on all. Therefore this man is like *Brahman,* and is established in Him. One with a steady mind, free from attachment, knowing the Eternal is not elated on achieving the desired object; neither is he depressed on facing the undesired. One who is mentally unattached to external objects enjoys the happiness of the soul which alone is capable of giving divine happiness. The pleasures of the body have a beginning and an end; he who is enlightened does not delight in them. He who is capable of facing successfully the urges of lust and anger in this world is wise; he enjoys the bliss in the self. He is free of bonds. Having known the Almighty as the enjoyer of all sacrifices and austerities, as the Lord of all worlds and the friend of all creatures, he attains peace (*nirvana*). One who performs sacrifices and austerities in proper spirit is dear to Him.

All actions should be oriented towards sacrifices

Thus actions should be oriented towards sacrifices and not towards narrow personal interests. These interests may satisfy the cravings of the body but not of the soul. If sacrifices are for material gains, the soul has to follow up the process of births paid in terms of pleasures and miseries.

Dhyana Yoga

The Lord now broaches the practice of *yoga* by *dhyana* or meditation, to be followed by detailed hints in Chapter VI. The practitioner should shut out external objects from his mind; he should fix his gaze between the eyebrows; he should exhale and inhale with equal slow measure; the breath should move about in the nostrils only (like that of some hibernating animal saving on calories); he should control the senses, mind and intellect; he should eschew desire, fear and anger, intent solely on liberation. Then will he realise Brahman, and attain peace.

Summary of Chapter

In conclusion, we may sum up the teachings. The Lord declares that *Karmayoga* is equal to *Karmasanyasa*, action which finds consummation in renunciation. This renunciation stems from indifference to the fruits of labour. Complete faith in God is also necessary. God fills the world. The wise man treats everybody equally.. All action is inspired by nature. Man is responsible for his actions. And he should not act for material gain. This is real *sanyasa*.

CHAPTER VI

THE YOGA OF SELF-CONTROL

Self Control — By Nishkama Yogi attains peace and Samadhi — Man his own friend or enemy — Lakshana of a Self-controlled yogi — The Sadhana of Dhyana — The golden mean of Mitha or moderation in life — Steadfastness of mind — Bliss the result of Atma Darsana — Arjuna's first question: Is not the mind uncontrollable? Krishna's answer: Though difficult, the mind can and should be controlled by practise and Vairagya — Arjuna's second question: What is fate of a Yoga Brashta? Krishna's answer: No spiritual striver comes to grief; he attains the god in the end. — Greatness of a Dhyana yogi — Summary of Chapter.

Self Control

This chapter deals with self-control. It can only be practised by a man who has given up all desire for worldly goods. The Lord begins by impressing on Arjuna that the person who engages in work without attachment is equal to one who does not maintain the household fire or does not work. (In the olden days, every family had its three fires maintained continuously, just as today it keeps its household taxes — the family gods in these days). This advice is of a piece with the whole tenor of the Gita, which

preaches action. The Lord wants to bring home that an active life is as good as a life of renunciation. But that activity should not crave for the fruits of labour. Then he equates the discipline of renunciation (*sanyasa yoga*), with the discipline of action (*karma yoga*), free of selfish motives (sankalpa).

By Nishkama Yogi attains peace and samadhi

After pointing out that the main pre-requisites for self-control is renunciation of selfish motives, the Lord now describes how a *yoga* aspirant attains his goal. *Karma* (selfless action) is the means by which the *yogi* attempts to rise in the discipline of self-control; on attaining the desired end, he gets peace. Here the word *shama* (*tranquility*) is used, which may come to the yogi at the fag end or be the means by which he attains this end. Peace of mind can come only to those who are indifferent to worldly possessions and to those who have fully controlled the senses through *yoga* practices. Only he may be said to have attained *yoga*, who has renounced the desires of the world and is not attached to sense-objects. He has reached *samadhi* (enlightenment and rest in God). There is no longer the need to be attached to work.

Man his own friend or enemy

To practice self-control, development of will power is stressed. To use a modern phrase, a man should lift himself by his own boot straps. A man is his own friend and enemy; he will rise or fall by himself. No man has a friend or foe outside of him. Therefore, he should himself develop his faculties and not fritter them away. He should rise and not go down. He who has conquered his baser self is his own friend; he who has not practised self-control is his own enemy.

Lakshana of a self-controlled yogi

The yogi who has attained the acme of his practice is described. He is self-disciplined and serene. He is un-

affected by cold and heat, happiness and misery, honour and dishonour; by controlling mind and senses; he experiences oneness with the Almighty. He is contented in mind by the knowledge and realisation of divinity. He considers a clod of earth or a stone and gold as of equal value. He is unwavering on realising God. He looks upon well-wishers, friends, enemies, neutrals, meditators, relations, saints and sinners with an even eye. This *yogi* subduing body and mind, should go on doing his duty, according to the dictates of conscience, God within and the world about, disregarding fortune and misfortune.

The Sadhana of Dhyana

Favourable environment is necessary for the practice of *yoga*. He should go to a secluded place, all by himself. He should not flag in practice. He should discipline his mind. He should be selfless and without desire for worldly possessions. The place should be clean. He should have his seat neither too high nor too low. (According to modern psychology proper environment and posture are necessary even in ordinary life; otherwise the person may develop symptoms of psychosis, of being enclosed or of falling from heights.) It is recommended that grass be spread on the ground, a deer skin placed over it and a cloth above, so as to provide comfort for the practising postulant of *yoga*. Then restraining his mind, he should concentrate and practice yoga for self-purification. The body should be held erect. He should gaze at the tip of the nose, without looking on either side. Mind should be free and fearless. Celibacy is recommended. The mind should dwell on God alone. When the mind is steadfast, he attains peace ending in *nirvana*. This is *jivanmukti* or emancipation while living.

The golden mean of Mitha or moderation in life

What are the conditions for success in *yoga*? First come control and celibacy. Then moderation in feeding and sleeping. Moderation in everything is necessary, even in recreation. It is only the disciplined mind that

can practice and rest in *yoga,* like a lamp in a windless place, without flickering and shining steadily.

Steadfastness of mind

The mind of the *yogi,* who has advanced in the practice of *yoga* does not waver. His mind is always cheerful, experiencing the eternal and super-sensuous joy. In this state, he never swerves from truth. He does not reckon any other gain as greater. He is not moved even by the greatest sorrow. His mind is free from contacts with objects.

Bliss the result of Atma Darsana

This *yoga* should be practised with an even mind, renouncing all desires and thoughts of the world; the yogi should control the senses. He should concentrate the mind on the self and should think of nothing else. He whose mind is completely calm, composed and sinless, who is one with God in mind, attains the highest bliss; steadfast in yoga he sees his own self in all beings and all beings in his own self, with a pure even mind. His bliss transcends all senses.

The *yogi* should curb his mind whenever it wavers and bring it under control. Then he will realise the bliss supreme. He has now put away sin and is in contact with *Brahman.* Whatever his mode of living, he lives in Me. He applies the same standard to others as he applies to himself.

Arjuna's first question: Is not the mind uncontrollable?

At this stage, Arjuna raises a very pertinent question, regarding this *yoga.* Since the mind is fickle by nature, is not this *yoga* incapable of attainment? The mind is inherently violent, powerful and obstinate; it is like the wind, difficult to control.

Krishna's answer: Though difficult the mind can and should be controlled by practice and Vairagya

The Lord agrees with Arjuna that the mind is difficult to control. But it can be disciplined by constant practice

and detachment. One who has controlled the mind and striven through proper means can attain *yoga.*

Arjuna's Second question: What is fate of a Yoga Bhrashta?

Arjuna again asks, "Suppose a yogi is full of faith, but unable to control himself. What fate awaits him for failure to attain perfection? Does he disappear completely like a piece of cloud, without leaving a trace behind?"

Krishna's answer: No spiritual striver comes to grief; he attains the god in the end

The Lord assures Arjuna that one who does good will not come to grief. He who falls from *yoga* attains the world of the righteous till his stock of merit gives out. Then he is reborn in the house of the pure and prosperous. Such a birth is rare. The soul recaptures the lost thread; remembers the purpose and practise of *yoga,* undertaken in previous lives, and strives again to attain perfection in subsequent bodies. The start already made in former lives stands now in good stead. This makes practice easier. He continues to strive and reaches perfection, in this life or in a subsequent one. No effort is ever lost.

Greatness of a Dhyana Yogi

"The perfect *yogi* has surpassed the teachings of the Vedas. A *yogi* is greater than a man of austerities, greater than a man of knowledge, even greater than a man of actions. But of all the *yogis,* one who worships Me with faith and merges his mind in Me, is the *yogi* of the highest order.

Summary of Chapter

Of all the chapters, this one deals in the practice of *yoga* proper: the *yoga* of the recondite, of those who practise austerities by self-control and attain Brahman. Other disciplines mentioned in other chapters are of equal value and efficacy in realising the supreme, like those of devo-

tion (*bhakti*), knowledge (*sankhya*), meditation (*dhyana*), and action (*karma*). Self-control is the sine qua non of *yoga*. To attain self-control, meditation should be practised assiduously, in a favourable environment, in the prescribed posture, in a proper seat. No effort in *yoga* goes in vain; striving does not cease with death. The soul carries the remembrance of knowledge, which inspires the present incumbent to continue the effort till completion. This chapter is also named by some as on meditation, because it (*dhyana*) is explained at length in this chapter.

CHAPTER VII

YOGA OF KNOWLEDGE OF BRAHMAN AND THE MANIFEST DIVINITY

Jnana and Vijnana have different connotations — Real knowers of God very few — Higher and lower forms of God — Four types of men seek God — Difference in results of worship of lesser gods and the one Atman God — Characteristics of God — Summary of Chapter.

Jnana and Vijnana have different connotations

Jnana is knowledge of Brahman and *Vijnana* that of the Manifest of God. The former (*Brahman*) is formless; the latter is with some form, visible to the eye. By *jnana* some people mean knowledge, and by *vijnana*, realisation, which is the higher stage of knowledge. By and large, the former word signifies general knowledge and the latter specialised knowledge or science.

Real knowers of God very few

Having explained about the yogi who confides in and worships Him, the Lord proceeds to explain the inherence of the Almighty in all creation. He unfolds to Arjuna the real knowledge of the Divinity; if God is known nothing else remains to be known. As the Kathavalli Upanishad states in 1 — 2 — 7 the majority of mankind is indiffe-

rent to spiritual matters; very few have the curiosity to know about their Atman or God; even among them very few persist to the very end of actual knowledge and realisation of God.

Higher and lower forms of God

The Lord's nature is of two types, lower and higher. Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, reason and ego constitute the eightfold nature of God — This is the lower type. But there is the other higher one, by which the whole universe is sustained. This is the Life principle. All beings have evolved from His two-fold nature. The Lord is the source of creation and dissolution of the universe. There is nothing higher than the Lord. All things are strung on him like beads on a thread. The Lord is the taste in water, the light in the moon and the sun, the quintessence of the Vedas (Om), and the life present in all beings. He is the fragrance in the earth, the brilliance in the fire, and austerity in the ascetics. He is the eternal seed in all beings, intellect of the intelligentsia and the glory of the glorious. He is the strength of the strong, free from passion and desire. He is sexual love, consistent with virtue and religion. Moreover, the qualities of goodness, activity and inertia are all evolved from Him, though in reality, the Lord neither exists in them nor they in Him. This means that God does not interfere in the normal life of beings. Deluded by the three fold qualities of *Prakriti* and its *gunas,* the world does not know Him. He is above these gunas and is immutable, because these attributes do not affect Him at all. It is difficult for man to get over these three dispositions of nature; but those who seek refuge in Him cross the hurdles successfully. Those wretched, sinful men, whose discrimination is affected by hallucination do not seek refuge in Him.

Four types of men seek God

Four types of people turn to God and worship Him; the man in distress, the seeker of knowledge, the seeker of wealth and the man of wisdom. Of these, the man of

wisdom who is constantly devoted to Him is the best, because the Lord is extremely dear to him and he is dear to the Lord. It does not mean that the other three are less noble; all the other three are also noble. But the wise man is the soul of the Lord, because he has dedicated himself to Him, with a mind devoutly centred in the Lord. At the end of multiple births, the man of wisdom realises God; he comes to know that He is everything. Such a man who realises that Vasudeva God who is present in all things, and He in whom all things dwell — is sarvam or all is very rare indeed.

Difference in results of worship of lesser Gods and the one Atman God

Persons take refuge in other kinds of gods consistent with their inherent impulses. However, the Lord says He stabilises the faith of those who follow other gods. Having followed their own faith, people achieve their desired objects in accordance with the ways prescribed therefor by the Lord. But the result achieved by these people of poor wisdom is perishable. Those who worship other lesser gods no doubt achieve their objects; but the devotees of the One Lord achieve Him. Here the difference between those who seek fleeting happiness and those who seek lasting happiness is made clear. Those who worship the One and true Brahman will get emancipated.

Characteristics of God

The characteristics of the Lord are now described: "Men of poor understanding think of Me, the unmanifest, as having assured human form. They are not aware of My immutable, unsurpassed nature. The ordinary man cannot know Me, as I am enveloped by *yoga maya* or cosmic illusion." The Lord tells Arjuna that He knows all the past, present and future; but none knows Him. All creatures are deluded by infatuation, created by opposite duals, like love and hate. However, the virtuous man cleansed of his sins and freed from delusion of opposites worship Him with firm devotion. Those who strive to rise

above the pains of old age and death, — the pangs of mortality — know the infinite (*Brahman*), the Self and the meaning of *karma* (action). Those who know fully that He is present in *Adhibhuta, Adhidaiva* and *Adhiyajna* shed all fear, even at the time of death and realise God. The above terms are explained in the next chapter, as nature, the presiding God and the soul respectively.

The Lord is present in everything in this universe and one who realises this is the real devotee. He knows that there is the Reality which is above other aspects created by the mind. An emancipated devotee is rare and only he attains oneness with the Lord.

Summary of Chapter

The Lord's nature (*prakriti*) is both high (*para*) and low (*apara*). All the excellent qualities are from God. Different types of men worship different gods and follow different paths. But the one God receives all their adoration and vouchsafes His grace. All action must be done with complete faith in God. *Jnana* is the correct knowledge of God and *Vijnana* is knowledge of his different aspects. The next chapter dilates upon the theme presented in this chapter that God is everything, that from Him issue forth nature and all beings.

CHAPTER VIII

THE YOGA OF THE INDESTRUCTIBLE BRAHMAN

Arjuna wants to know how words fit in — Krishna explains the words — How departing soul reaches God (a) By constant thought (b) By yogic method — The yogic method — Constant thought — Time is relative while God is Eternal — The two paths of light and darkness — Summary of Chapter.

Arjuna wants to know how words fit in

Now Arjuna wants to know the meaning of the terms used by the Lord in the last chapter, and how those of steadfast mind know the Lord at the time of death.

Krishna explains the words

The Lord explains that the Indestructible is Brahman. It is Supreme. Its nature is *adhyatma*, to preside over. The activity which creates and issues forth is *Karma*. Adhibhuta is perishable nature; *Adhidaiva* is the supreme spirit called *Purusha* in a subsequent chapter. The Lord is present in all bodied things as *Adhiyajna*.

Virtually, the position is like this. The Supreme Soul is akshara or indestructible. This Supreme Soul while in action is *adhyatma*, something like the Holy Ghost of the Bible. He creates the universe, which is perishable; but

He inheres in creation. The soul supreme is present in the body as *adhiyajna.* When we remember that the world was created through sacrifice, according to the *Purusha Sookta* of the Rigveda, the world *adhiyajna* when applied to souls seems appropriate.

How departing soul reaches God (a) By constant thought

The departing soul of man will reach either of the two following goals. One who leaves the body at the time of death concentrating his mind on the Lord ultimately meets the spirit of the Lord. Alternatively his other thoughts and desires at the time of death will shape his future corporeal life. Mundane life is uncertain; we do not know when the call of death will come. Therefore the Lord advises Arjuna to remember Him for all time and fight (the battle of life). If mind and intellect are surrounded to Him, the devotee is sure to reach Him. To achieve this, the mind should ever be engrossed in Him. To achieve this, the mind should be made steadily to dwell on the resplendent *Purusha;* then the devotee will reach Him.

(a) By Yogic method

When the yogi relinquishes the body, he fixes his breath in the middle of the eyebrows, with all devotion and force of practice on the *Purusha* (Supreme Being), who is omniscient, the most Ancient, the Ruler, smaller than an atom but capable of supporting the universe, of inconceivable form, shining like the sun and driving away darkness. And then the departing yogi reaches Him.

The Yogic method

Now the Lord proceeds to explain in brief the goal which the knowers of the Vedas understand as supreme and indestructible; which the recluses freed from attachment, enter; to enter which men lead a life of celibacy. Having restrained all senses of the body, fixing the mind on the Lord, repeating the sacred syllable Om, the aspirant

should engage himself in yoga; the gates of the body should be closed; the mind should be fixed in the heart; after raising the breath to the head, he should leave the body. This is the practice which yogis follow at the time of freeing themselves from mortal coils.

Constant thought

The Lord says that He is easily accessible to those yogis, who constantly think of Him to the exclusion of other things. One who reaches Him does not come back to this miserable world. From all other worlds, including that of Brahma, the departed soul returns to earth after its period of rest is over; but those who go to Him do not get back. Hence the word Brahma is different from Brahman; the former is identified with the creator and the latter with the supreme Lord, the indestructible; with Krishna, the Preceptor of Arjuna. The creative aspect of the Lord is only one of the many aspects and is subordinated to the Supreme One without a second.

Time is relative while God is eternal

The Lord now explains the relativity of Brahma's day and night with that of man on earth. One day in Brahma consists of thousands of terrestrial eons. Life begins on earth with Brahma's day and ends with his night. The thoughts and activities of humanity are limited to the very short duration of time on the divine scale. So the Lord clarifies that the day of Brahma is creation, and that his night ends in merger. One should therefore understand this cyclic aspect of nature. However, beyond this merger and destruction there is the divine eternal substance, which does not perish, though all creation perishes. That unmanifest, the Indestructible is the supreme goal, the Lord, reaching which the devotee does not return. This Supreme, in Whom all beings reside and by whom all is pervaded is attainable by exclusive devotion.

The two paths of light and darkness

Then the Lord describes the two periods when departing devotees either return or do not return to earth.

The first is the time when the departing soul desires activities; there is smoke in the form of achievement of pleasures and night in the form of absence of knowledge. This is the dark half of the month of the winter solstice (*dakshinayana* or the southern path). The second path denotes the summer solstice (*uttarayana* or the northern path), when the bright half of the moon lasts. Each path lasts for six months. The yogi who dies in the southern solstice comes back and the yogi who dies in the northern solstice goes to the Lord.

The above are allegorical expressions that show the difference between *pitriyana* (the way of the manes) which is dark and *devayana* (the way of the gods) which is bright. The first is the path of ignorance and the second that of knowledge.

The Lord advises that knowing the two paths of darkness and light, the yogi is never deluded; at all times, he remains fixed in yoga. He attains the eternal supreme state, transcending the bliss promised in the Vedas; the latter (*devayana*) is attainable by sacrifices, penances and charities.

Summary of Chapter

The Lord explains the meanings of Nature, Soul, Oversoul, duty and death at the beginning of the chapter. The ultimate goal of life is not the attainment of heaven or of rebirth but the merging with Brahman. One who concentrates on any object at the time of death will be influenced by that object while taking a new body. Since death may occur at any time, man should always think on God, so that he may approach Him, after finishing his tenure on earth. Of the two paths of light and darkness the former leads to immortality and the yogi is advised to take to this path, by practice of yoga, adoring the Lord at all times, and fixing the mind on Him, while dying.

CHAPTER IX

THE YOGA OF THE SOVEREIGN SCIENCE AND THE SOVEREIGN SECRET

Raja Yoga — Praise of Raja Yoga — Paradox by Krishna — Explanation of Paradox — God remains a Katastha or immovable anvil while Prakrithi revolves the universe — The ways of the fools and the Bhaktas — Great Brahma Arpana Sloka — God is Sat and Asat — Sacrifices to the lesser gods confers the heavens but leads to rebirths — Worship of the Supreme Lord alone confers Immortality — Great Patram Pushpam sloka — God looks to spirit and Devotion alone and cares not for outward forms — Great Pratigna of God — No devotee of mine ever comes to any harm — Summary of Chapter.

Raja Yoga

The Sovereign Science teaches how to realise the Brahman. The Sovereign Secret is the practice of yoga, which had become obsolescent in course of time. The Lord teaches both these to Arjuna, who does not cavil, but accepts the teaching with faith and devotion.

Praise of Raja Yoga

The divine Preceptor commands this Raja yoga thus — that by the knowledge now being imparted, Arjuna will

be free from misery; that knowledge of it is most holy, that it can be directly experienced; that it is easily understood; that it is convenient to practise and of a permanent nature; that it is the king of all learning; that men who do not believe in this knowledge, do not attain the Lord but move about like the lost sheep in this mortal world.

Paradox by Krishna

"This universe is the manifest aspect of the Lord who remains unmanifest. All beings abide in the Lord; but the Lord does not abide in them. Nor do the beings dwell in me. Bringing forth and supporting them, I do not dwell in them. This is my divine yoga."

Explanation of Paradox

This equivocal statement is explained by the fact that though the Lord pervades in the universe, he does not actually interfere in the work-a-day life of man. He has created the world; He supports it; but man should work out his own destiny. The divine presence is always there in the world; but it is unseen and not visible to the naked eye. Only the wise would feel its presence. God is unaffected by His creation and man is also unaffected by God, in the sense that he has to follow the fixed laws of nature and himself bear the consequences of his actions.

God remains a Katastha or immovable anvil while Prakrithi revolves the universe

The divine strength of the Lord is wonderful. It is unaffected by phenomenon. Like the wind moving everywhere, but resisting in the sky, all things move about but rest in Him. All creatures emerge from His *prakriti* (nature) at the beginning of a *kalpa* (Brahma's day) and dissolve at the end of it. (Brahma's night). Another *kalpa* sees them generated once more. All these multitudes of creatures are sent forth again and again owing to the inherent force of nature, presided over by Him. These acts leave him unaffected. He remains like one in-

different. Under His supervision, nature produces moving and unmoving things.

The ways of the fools and the Bhaktas

Fools who see Him in human form cannot estimate His higher nature as the Lord of all creatures. Their hopes are vain; their actions useless, their knowledge delusive, their nature demoniac. But the ways of the devoted are different. These great souls adore Him with single-minded devotion, knowing Him as the immutable source of all beings. They always glorify His name, practise austerities, pray to Him being devoted to Him. They teach others about Him and His glories; this is their sacrifice unto Him, in the form of knowledge. They worship Him in various ways, though He is one; they worship Him as One; they worship Him also as the many. All the worship of the One without a second, of innumerable gods is His worship, because God is many added to one, and divided into infinite fractions.

Great Brahma Arpana Sloka

The Lord is everything. He is sacrifice with its different names and forms. He is the ghee poured into the fire, He is the Fire, He is the prayers offered, He is the oblation, He is the father of the world, its mother, grandfather Brahma; He is the one worth knowing, the sacred symbol Om and all the Vedas. He is the goal, the protector, the witness of all things thought, said and done, the refuge, the friend, the origin and end, the support, and the first imperishable seed.

God is Sat and Asat

He gives heat and cold; gives rain and causes droughts and floods; He is immortality; He is Death; He is being and non-being. The last qualification might mean that God's personality is so elusive that it may be said to be non-existent. This has led some philosophers to *shunya-vada,* the theory of non-existence considered to be exist-

ence, that the zero has a value, that the letter "X" may be used to solve problems in algebra.

Sacrifices to lesser gods confers the heavens but leads to rebirths

Now those who seek heaven and its enjoyment as described in the vedas, perform sacrifices and get credit for holy rituals performed as prescribed by the scriptures. As a result they go to the abode of the gods after death and enjoy celestial pleasures. But after their merit is exhausted, they have to return to the mortal world. Men get what they pray for and deserve. Some devotees, who worship Brahman alone to the exclusion of other gods obtain the welfare for which they have striven; this dedication to the one true God brings its own reward; it is merging in Him; it does not involve rebirth. People who worship other gods worship the Supreme One, but by the wrong method. But all that devotion is received by the Almighty.

Worship of the Supreme Lord alone confers Immortality

Therefore the Lord is the master of all sacrifices; He enjoys receiving them. Those who worship other deities do not realise that God is one, hence their merit is limited. The Lord says in effect: "Those who worship the gods, go to them; those who worship devils, to the devils; those who worship the manes, go to the manes. My devotees come to Me, never to return to worldly life."

Great Patram Pushpam Sloka — God looks to spirit and Devotion alone and cares not for outward forms

The Lord is satisfied even with a leaf, flower or water offered in dedicated veneration to Him; only the mind of the devotee should be controlled and pure. Whatever is done, eaten, sacrified, given in charity, and meditated in austerity, should be dedicated to the Lord as an offering. The devotee will be free from good and evil results, will be liberated from the bonds of birth because of his un-

divided faith and selfless renunciation. God, by Himself, looks upon every body with an even eye; but the earnest devotee is in Him, and the Lord is in the devotee. Identity with the Supreme is sure to follow, for the loving follower of God. Even sinful men, who engage in devotion will be liberated ultimately, because they are on the right track and will not miss the goal.

Great Pratijna of God: No devotee of mine ever comes to any harm

Finally, the Lord's promise to the devotee is heartening; it has been repeated through ages; men have followed it; they changed their lives; others changed on seeing the faith that moved mountains. God is the Suvratha — the one who has declared His vows of protecting His Bhakthas in the Ramayana and the Gita. He now calls upon Arjuna to swear on Krishna's behalf "Na Me Bhakta Pranasyathi" — No devotee of mine will ever perish or come to any harm.

"My devotee shall not fall". This message still rings true. The Lord asks Arjuna; "If sinful men can be liberated, why not holy men and loyal saints like you? Even women, merchants, peasants and servants will attain the supreme goal. The one thing necessary is heart-felt dedication and steadfast devotion to the Lord."

Women and other classes are mentioned because, they were more backward educationally; they had not the economic freedom to engage themselves solely to the service of the Lord; they were busy bringing up children, selling things growing crops. Hence even they could qualify for liberation through love of God and dedication to Him.

Summary of Chapter

In this chapter, the Lord explains true knowledge about God and His manifest aspect, Men without faith make peripatetic journeys into this world and out of it. Men who worship gods, offer sacrifices according to the Vedas, accumulate credit for their good actions, enjoy

heavenly pleasures, but return to earth when their merit balance is wiped out. But those who worship the one God, Brahman, Krishna do not return to worldly life. They merge in the supreme. God should be considered as something intangible, though He creates, sustains and destroys the world repeatedly. True devotion leads to emancipation. Even the smallest offerings are acceptable to Him, when tendered with faith. God is all; true salvation is to attain Him, rather than enjoy the blessings of this world or of paradise. His votaries will be saved, irrespective of sex or caste. The commoners are equal with the elite in the eyes of the Lord, in their role of devotees.

CHAPTER X

THE YOGA OF DIVINE GLORIES

God is everything and all Vibhutis or glories emanate from Him — The original progenitors — God lights the lamp of Wisdom — Arjuna asks Krishna to enumerate His Vibhutis — Krishna's rejoinder — Summary of Chapter.

God is everything and all Vibhutis or glories emanate from Him

That the Lord is everything and is the root of all things is emphasised in this chapter. It is only those who are devoted to Him who understand this. The Lord declares here, that because Arjuna is devoted to Him with full love and faith, He would deliver him His supreme word for spiritual welfare. Even the great saints and gods do not know the origin of the Lord, though he is their prime source. Only those men who are free from delusion comprehend Him as the ultimate reality, without a beginning and as the supreme Lord of all beings. Because of this knowledge, they are purged of all sins. Intellect, wisdom, freedom from delusion, forgiveness, truth, control of senses and the mind, happiness and misery, evolution and dissolution, fear and fearlessness, non-violence, equanimity, contentment, austerity, charity, fame and infamy, all these diverse feelings and happenings emanate from the Lord alone.

The original progenitors

The seven seers, the four ancients and fourteen Manus (progenitors of mankind) were the creation of the Lord's mind; all other creatures were born of them. One who knows this supernatural power of the Lord and His glory will be firmly devoted to Him. The wise are full of faith and devotion knowing full well that He is the cause of creation and that from Him all things evolve.

God lights the lamp of Wisdom

The Lord now clarifies the real nature of wise men. With all their minds fixed on the Lord, they delight in discussion on Him, they enlighten one another; they expatiate on His glories; their life is absorbed in Him. To those who are devoted to Him, is vouchsafed the Lord's grace of discrimination; fortified with this wisdom they attain Him ultimately. The compassionate Lord removes from His devotees' minds the darkness of ignorance through the luminous lamp of wisdom. Thus the devotees realise that it is the Lord who is everything and that all phases of life emanate from Him only; thereby they achieve complete satisfaction, and the joys of the mind and soul.

Arjuna asks Krishna to enumerate His Vibhutis

At this stage Arjuna affirms his faith in the Lord and requests Him to indicate His Vibhutis.

"You are the supreme, the eternal, the ultimate resort and the great purifier. All the sages like Narada, Asita, Devala and Vyasa look upon you as the primordial, divine, unborn, pervasive, *Purusha*; you yourself confirm this now. Therefore, Oh, Lord, I firmly believe what you say that your real manifestation is not known to the gods and demons. Therefore Oh: God of gods, and Master of the Universe: you know yourself only by yourself. For that reason you are competent to describe your divine glories with which you have invested all beings. Oh: Master of Yoga, what is the way which, thinking of you I can know you thoroughly? What are the forms in which

I can comprehend you? Oh: Janardana: Kindly describe at length your power of yoga and the nature of your glory. I am thirsty for your nectarious words; I delight in them to my heart's content and will never be satiated."

Krishna's rejoinder

The Lord then proceeds to give some examples of His divine glories; He cannot give full details, because there is no end to them.

"I am the soul situated in the hearts of all beings. I am the beginning, the middle and the end of everything. Of the *Adityas,* I am Vishnu; the radiant sun among the luminaries; the wind-god among the winds, and the moon shining at night among the stars. Among the senses, I am the mind; among living beings I am vital energy. Among the gods of destruction, I am the god of fire and among the mountains I am *Meru.* Know me as Brihaspati among the priests. Among the leaders of hosts, I am *Kartikeya,* the general of the gods, Among pools of waters, I am the ocean, of the great saints, I am Bhrigu; the supreme syllable "Om" among utterances; repititive chanting of sacred formula (*japa*) among all sacrifices and Himalaya among the immovables. Among the trees, I am the Asvatha, the holy *pipal* (fig) tree, I am Narada among the sages, Chitraratha among the *gandharvas* (celestial songsters) and Kapila among *Siddhas* (those emancipated by penance). Among the horses, know Me as Uchchaishravas that emerged after the churning of the ocean; among elephants I am verily Airavata, Indra's elephant. I am the monarch among men; I am thunderbolt among weapons, Kamadhenu (celestial cow granting desires) among cows; Kama god of sexual love in procreation and Vasuki among serpents. I am Ananta among snakes, Varuna the god of water among acquatic deities; Aryama among the manes (the first of the departed souls). Among those who control destinies, I am Mrityu the god of Death. Among the daityas, I am Prahlada; time among the calculators, lion among beasts and Garuda (the heavenly eagle) among birds. I am the wind among the purifiers, Rama among

wielders of weapons, alligator among fishes, and the holy Ganga among rivers. I alone am the beginning, middle and the end of the worlds. Of all sciences, I am the Brahma Vidya the Science of the Self. I am logic in argument. I am the first letter in the alphabet and the dual (*dvandva*) among compounds (words are joined to obtain brevity of expression and the dual a compound maintains the equal identity of the constituent words.) I alone am the endless time and the dispenser of the fruits of all actions, I face all directions. I am the devouring death as well as the cause of subsequent creations. Among the feminine qualities, I am good repute, glory of grace, firmness and forbearances, soft speech, good memory and intelligence (This shows the Lord's high regard for womanhood; incidentally all the qualities expected of an ideal woman are in the feminine gender in Sanskrit, as if reflecting the feminine virtues). I am the Brihath Sama among the hymns; among Chhandas, I am Gayatri, in which the famous prayer is composed. Among the twelve lunar months of the calendar, I am Margasiras. I am spring among the seasons, when nature springs to life. I am gambling among those practising fraud; the glory of the glorious; Vasudeva among the Yadavas (the race to which He belonged in the incarnation) and Arjuna among the Pandavas (the greatest devotee of the Lord). I am Vyasa among the sages and Shukracharya among the philosophers or men of wisdom. (The word "*Kavi*" applied to him signifies a poet, a man of intuitive knowledge and imagination; and the great priest herein named knew the secret of immortality). I am Danda the power of those who punish; the statesmanship of those who seek conquest; the Mauna or the very silence of the secretive and the wisdom of the wise. I am the seed of all beings and there is no movable and immovable thing which is bereft of me."

This long list helps to show divine essence in all great things and ends up in saying that all things are of God and from God. The Lord concludes, "There is no end to my divine glories. I have just touched upon the extent of

some of these powers by pointing to a few examples. Whatever is glorious, prosperous or powerful, know that it has sparked out of My effulgence. What is the point of knowing all this in such detail? In short, I am holding this entire universe by only a fraction of my power."

Summary of Chapter

This chapter makes it clear that God is the source of everything; He is all pervasive; there is nothing good nor bad in which He is not present. The limitations of men are made clear by the above examples, and the sovereignty of the Lord is brought home to the disciple.

CHAPTER XI

THE YOGA OF THE VISION OF THE COSMIC FORM

Arjuna prays for Visvarupa Darsanam — Krishna confers the Divya Chakshas or Eye Divine — The Cosmic form — Only Bakth can behold the Cosmic form and through it realise formless God — Arjuna Stuthi — Krishna tell me who you are — Arjuna, I am Time the Destroyer — Arjuna is overwhelmed and prays to Krishna to appear as human — Krishna resumes his usual form — Conclusion.

Arjuna prays for Visvarupa Darsanam

The Lord so far explained that He existed in all forms of nature, in all good and bad things, in abstract ideas and concrete bodies. Arjuna says that now all his delusions have disappeared. He admits that he heard from the Lord details about the evolution and dissolution of beings and also the immortal glory of the Lord. He admits that the Lord has been exactly described. Now he longs to see the divine form of the Lord. We all know the importance of visual presentation in education and how firmly the mind imbibes optical impressions. The earnest disciple Arjuna wants to see the abstract in the concrete and asks the Lord whether he is fit to behold the form of the Lord and, if He thinks he is qualified, he prays to be shown that form.

Krishna confers the Divya Chakshas or Eye Divine

The visual power of the human eye is limited. Hence the Lord grants him divine sight to see His divine glories. He offers to show Arjuna His thousands of glorious forms which are of innumerable shapes, styles and sizes. He would show the sons of Aditi, the Vasus, the Rudras, the Ashvinikumars and Maruts (gods of nature and healing); all the wonders not seen before. He would show in His body the entire universe with its moving and stable forms and whatever else Arjuna wants to see. It is not possible to see them with normal eyes, and without eyes of faith. And Arjuna has that faith and the Lord grants him the extrasensory perception now.

The Cosmic Form

Now the Lord manifested His supreme divine form to Arjuna. This form had innumerable mouths and eyes, innumerable divine ornaments, countless hands wielding myriads of powerful weapons; His body was besmeared with fragrant pastes, clothed in wonderful garments and adorned with beautiful garlands. He had faces on all sides. He shone brightly as if a thousand suns had lent their effulgence to Him. On that occasion Arjuna sighted in the body of the Lord the whole universe and also its multitudinous parts.

Only a Baktha can behold the Cosmic Form and through it realise Formless God

This is a picture of the possibilities which baffle the human mind; things contrary to normal things may occur. The entire universe is pervaded by God. There is nothing constant and perfect. The cycle of evolution and dissolution goes on eternally. We cannot see through this phenomenon, judge it, change it or prevent it. Therefore, it is made clear at the end of this chapter that only a person with a devout, unattached outlook can see the Form and through the Form, realise the Formless one. Therefore the cosmic form consists of possibilities even more numerous than those revealed to Arjuna.

Arjuna Stuthi

Struck by wonder Arjuna bowed down his head to the Lord and said with folded hands, in all humility:—

"Oh. God. I see on your body all the gods, multitudes of various beings, the god of creation Brahma seated on a lotus, the god Shankara, all the saints and serpents. You have multitude of arms, bellies, mouths and eyes; other innumerable forms extend on all sides. But I do not see your beginning, middle or end. I see you crowned, holding the mace, and the discus, clustered with brilliance, difficult to behold, brilliant like the blazing fire and the sun. You are immeasurable from all sides. You are the supreme abode of this universe. You are indestructible and eternal. You are the defender of the eternal truth (*dharma*). So I do believe you. I see you armed and powerful, with the sun and moon as your eyes, your mouth emitting blazing fire and scorching the universe with your radiance. The expanse between the sky and the earth and all the directions are pervaded by you alone.

"All the three worlds are extremely scared on seeing Your wondrous and dreaded form. The multitude of gods just enter you alone; some who are scared pray with folded hands; the great sages and *siddhas* supplicate you with numerous sacred prayers, praying for benedictions. Moreover, the supernatural beings all are looking upon you in utter amazement. Having seen your terrible armed form all the persons and I too are frightened. I am bereft of fortitude and tranquillity. Be pleased and gracious.

Krishna, tell me who you are

"All the inimical sons of Dhritarashtra along with their leaders and allied kings rapidly enter your huge and dreadful mouths and are seen chewed among the fangs. Just as the rivers flow into the sea, so do these warriors enter your flaming mouth; just as moths rush into fire with great speed, so do these men enter your jaw for their destruction. You lick all these people, swallowing them from all sides in your fiery mouths. Your terrible bril-

liance burns the entire universe and fills it with your brilliance. Tell me, oh Terrible One. Who you are; I am not able to comprehend your purpose. Oh. Best of gods. Be pleased. I wish to know you."

The Lord showed Arjuna His terrible aspect. He showed His all-pervading, destructive, creative and inscrutable power. Arjuna had refused to fight but the Lord willed it otherwise. The divine form reveals that:

(1) Whatever is created is bound to face destruction;

(2) The power of the Almighty will prevail, despite calculations to the contrary;

(3) The inscrutable course of Providence cannot be discerned without recognition of the greatness of God.

The Lord now declared:—

Arjuna, I am Time the Destroyer

"I am the All-destroying Time. I am set upon destruction. All the warriors in the hostile army will be destroyed, even if you do not fight. Rise to conquer, achieve glory and enjoy royal power. Your enemies are as good as dead. You are only an instrument."

Arjuna is overwhelmed and prays to Krishna to appear as human

On hearing this, Arjuna was moved to a great sense of gratitude and devotion. He prayed with fear in his heart in a faltering voice:—

"Oh; Controller of the Senses: By chanting your glory, the universe is filled with joy. On the other hand, the demons fly away from Thee in fear. All the hosts of the Siddhas bow unto you. All praise and adoration is due to you. Why should they all not worship you, the Supreme Being: Oh: Lord of the Universe: You know everything and you are worth knowing. Having endless forms, you pervade the Universe. You are the wind, the

god of death, fire, moon, Brahma the creator, and also the creator of Brahma. Thousands of salutations to you. Salutations again and again, from the front, from the back, from all sides. You are the eternal strength, immeasurable prowess, and origin of all things having form. I had no full idea of your greatness; therefore, if by mistake I have slighted you or through love, made light of your might, called you "Krishna, Yadava, Friend, Companion"; if out of familiarity disregarded you when alone or in company, while joking, playing, sitting, and dining, I beg pardon of you for all those unintended offences. You of infallible might: You are the father of the movable and immovable world. You are the revered and the best Teacher. There is none equal to you in all the three worlds; so how can there be any one superior to you? Prostrating myself, I beseech you to be pleased. Condone our faults like a father condoning his son's shortcomings, a friend those of a friend, a husband those his beloved. Beholding for the first time your form not seen before, I rejoice and also fear, by turns now. Therefore Oh God: Let me see your normal form. Be gracious. I wish to see with your usual crown, holding the mace and the discus. Oh: One with a thousand arms: Appear again in the four-armed form".

The form which Lord Krishna showed to Arjuna was unique; it was not seen by anyone else. In fact, it was a form difficult to comprehend. It was full with the power of destruction and creation. Inscrutable are the ways of the Providence and of the vision shown by the Lord to Arjuna.

Krishna resumes his normal form

Then the Lord said: "Being pleased with you, I have shown you with my power this bright, eternal, primeval form which none beside you has seen before. I am not capable of being seen in this mortal world, by anyone else, not even through the Vedas, sacrifices, studies, charities, rituals or austere penance. Do not feel perturbed on

seeing this dreadful form. You will now see my familiar form with a mind free from fear and full of joy".

The Lord then reverted to his normal human form. Seeing His gentle appearance, the frightened Arjuna was consoled and regained composure.

The Lord, then, concluded:

"The form which you saw is difficult for any mortal to see. Even the gods are always desirous of seeing this form. It is impossible to see me in the configuration in which you saw me, even through Vedas, penance, charities and sacrifices. Only through superb devotion, can I be known, seen and entered into. That devotee of mine who works for me, who is attached to me, who is free from delusions, who is without malice towards all beings attains me."

Conclusion

Thus the Lord concludes that to attain Him, devotion, freedom from desires and attachments are necessary. There should be no malice but goodwill towards all creatures. It is only such a devotee that will develop the capacity to see the Lord. And having seen that Form, nothing else remains to be seen. Even scriptures and rituals will not help in realising the ambition to see the Lord in all His glory, if prayers are not backed by devotion and surrender to the Lord.

CHAPTER XII

THE YOGA OF DEVOTION

Arjuna asks — is worship of God with form preferable, or without form? Personal God easy to worship — Worship of Impersonal God not easy for man who is an embodied being — The Least Common alternatives — The alternatives not intended as real comparisons, but as spurs to action in context — Lakshana of a Bhaktha and the Dharmya Amritham or nectarine exposition of the 32 divine qualities of a true Bhaktha — Summary of Chapter.

Arjuna asks — Is worship of God with form preferable, or without form?

Who is the best devotee? That is the question posed by Arjuna. In answer, the Lord teaches him the yoga of Bhakti or devotion. Now Arjuna asks Krishna, whether the adoration of God with form is preferable to the one without form, the Imperishable, the supreme Brahman.

Personal God easy to worship

The Lord replies:—

"The Yogis who are united to me with supreme faith, with the mind completely attached, to me, solely meditating on Me are the best." Here preference is given to the

cult of the Personal God, who has given His love to His devotee. The devotee always feels the presence of His God, sings His praises and describes His glory. Later on, this Bhakti cult was to spread all over India. Of the devotees, the Sikhs and Brahma Samajists do not worship God with form; others worship symbols, Like the Virashaivas; the rest worship the supreme in human form.

Worship of Impersonal God not easy for man who is an embodied being

After praising those who adore a personal God, the Lord now gives an equal importance to those who seek the formless One. "Those whose controlling the senses are even-minded towards all and are engaged in the well-being of all creatures adore My pure indescribable, unmanifest, all-pervading, unthinkable, omnipresent, aspect also attain Me." The two disciplines, devotion to a personal God and to an impersonal God are deemed equal by the Lord. However, the Lord explains, that embodied souls would find it more difficult to realise the formless supreme; identification with the unmanifest is not easy.

The least Common Alternatives

The Lord now repeats the burden of His song (Gita) that He speedily grants emancipation from worldly coils to those who are devoted to Him and dedicate their actions to Him. "Therefore you should engage your mind on Me; and there is no doubt that you will be one with Me. If you are unable to concentrate your mind, go in for constant practice. If you are unable to practice this mental exercise, then engage in actions dedicated to Me. Being engaged in work for Me, you will attain perfection. If you are unable to do even that, then take refuge in Me, work with a controlled mind, abandoning the desire for the fruits of labour. Discrimination is far better than practice, meditation better than discrimination (knowledge) and abandoning the fruits of labour performed, better than meditation. By renunciation of fruits, peace is achieved."

The alternatives not intended as real comparisons, but as spurs to action in context

The comparisons seem apparently invidious; but the Lord while explaining different yogas or disciplines praises each one of them; but He always turns round to praise the one fact uttermost in His mind, the abandonment of the desire for results (*nishkamakarma*). If we take into consideration the juxtaposition of the embattled armies, the refusal to fight a righteous war for fear of killing, we shall appreciate the fact that the message was to fight regardless of consequence, and that the message is topical and pertinent even to this day.

Lakshana of a Bhaktha and the Dharmya Amritham

"Such a yogi, who is a devotee is dear unto Me. (1) He who is free from malice towards all beings, (2) friendly in behaviour, (3) compassionate, (4) free from attachments, (5) bereft of pride, (6) looks upon happiness and misery alike, (7) who is patient and forgiving (8) who is always contended (9) who is a yogi (10) who is keeping the mind under control, (11) who is firm in decisions, (12) who dedicates his mind and intellect to Me, (13) whom the world does not fear (14) who is not afraid of the world; (15) who is indifferent to joy, anger; fear and anxiety is dear to Me. (16) He is dear to Me, who does not expect anything from anyone, (17) pure, (18) alert, (19) who is indifferent (20) He who does not enter upon any new Karma or work or continue those already begun with a sense of binding or imposition (21) he who neither rejoices nor sorrows, does not crave (22) he who is able to relinquish both good and bad (23) he who has the same attitude towards friend or foe, (24) who is indifferent to honour or insult, (25) who is indifferent to cold and heat, happiness and misery; (26) who is free from attachment to company or worldly affairs, (27) who takes praise and blame alike (28) Who is a Mauni or controls his speech, (29) who is satisfied with whatever he earns; (30) who is homeless, (31) who has a steady mind. Such devotees are exceedingly dear unto Me. They also who look upto

Me with faith and partake of this Dharmya Amritham, this nectarine exposition of the 31 divine qualities of a true Baktha are also dear unto Me."

Summary of Chapter

In short, love for all and hatred for none, indifference to worldly possessions and the fruits of labour, endear the earnest devotee to God. And the devotee may attain perfection by adoration of a personal God or the formless Brahman.

CHAPTER XIII

YOGA OF THE DIFFERENTIATION BETWEEN THE FIELD AND THE KNOWER OF THE FIELD

Kshetra Kshetrajna Viveka — Difference between both set forth in Vedas, Brahma Sutras etc. — Kshetram explained — Jnanam and Ajnanam explained — Jneyam or Brahman the thing to be known — Interaction of Prakrithi and Purusha — Realisation of difference between Kshetram and Kshetrajna leads to Brahman — Summary of Chapter.

Kshetra Kshetrajna Viveka

In this chapter nature in general and the body in particular are compared to the field; the over soul within the phenomena, including the body, is called the knower of the field; the knowledge of this differentiation between the physical and the spiritual is considered knowledge par excellence. Having realised this, man should utilise this knowledge for his spiritual development.

Difference between both set forth in Vedas, Brahma Sutras etc.

The Lord teaches us about the field, its properties, the changes it is likely to undergo, whence it came, where it disappears and what its powers are. The truth about the

nature of the field and its knower has been sung by sages in innumerable ways; it has been described in various chants of the Vedas and is expressed in definite and purposeful aphorisms of the Brahma-sutras.

Kshetram explained.

The Lord says he would briefly describe the field. It is made up of the five subtle elements, ether, air, fire, water, and earth; the ego, the intellect, nature, the ten senses, the mind, and the five objects of the senses, namely, sound, touch, colour, taste and smell are then added; desires, aversion, pleasure, pain, the assemblage of the various parts of the body, vitality, and fortitude are also included; these are subject to change.

Jnanam and Ajnanam explained

The Lord now explains the different aspects of true knowledge which leads to emancipation. It consists of humility, freedom from hypocrisy, non-violence, forgiveness, uprightness, service of the teacher, purity, steadiness, mental restraint, aversion to sensuality, absence of egoism, perception of evil in births, deaths, old age, disease and misery, non-attachment in general and the absence of attachment in particular towards son, wife and household, constant equanimity on getting the desirable and the undesirable, exclusive devotion to the Lord which is unswerving, love of loneliness, aversion to crowds, attachment to self-knowledge and to the meaning of this knowledge. What is contrary to this is ignorance.

Now the Lord makes known what the field is and how it is to be ploughed; it is to be ploughed with true knowledge. Thereafter He explains the subject of knowledge, which is Brahman. It is worth knowing because it leads to salvation or immortality.

Jneyam or Brahma the thing to be known

The Brahman is eternal. It is neither being nor nonbeing. It is all pervading, with arms and legs spread out,

with all-seeing eyes, heads and mouths everywhere, with ears listening from all sides. Thus It (neither male nor female) extends in all directions. Though this Brahman is manifested in all senses, It is above them, and has no sense-organs, It is unattached, yet sustains all. It is devoid of the three gunas of Satva, Rajas, Tamas yet It experiences them all. It is within and without all bodies; unmoving and also moving about; unknown because of subtlety; though far, near; indivisible, yet divided; though sustainer of all living beings, destroys and generates; It is known as the sustainer of those generated. It is the light of all lights and is said to be beyond darkness.

Thus does the Lord brings out the nature of the supreme soul, by mutually contradictory phrases, so as to bring home to the aspirant the elusive, incomprehensible nature of godhood. "It is knowledge itself; It alone is fit to be known; and It is capable of being known. It resides in the hearts of all." The Lord now declares that He has stated in brief the field, the knower and the knowledge of these both. Having known this, the Lord's devotee achieves the capacity to understand the nature of Brahman and become one with it. Needless to say that the Brahman is to be identified with Krishna, the Lord, who teaches these truths. He divides Himself into individual souls.

Integration of Prakrithi and Purusha

Now the Lord declares that both nature (*prakriti*) and Brahman (*Purusha*) are without a beginning. All modifications and qualities (*gunas*) are born of nature. The frailities are inherent in nature. From nature arises reasons and actions, while the Purusha (soul) experiences pleasure and pain. It is through the soul that nature's gifts are enjoyed; but if that soul is attached to the gunas or attributes of nature, it makes reappearance in good or evil re-births. The soul within the body is the witness of all actions, even though it is separate from the body. Nature inspires and causes all actions; the knower experiences the results, though ultimately He remains untouched,

One who knows all this is on the right path and will be saved from rebirth in this world, though he might be engaged in actions in all spheres. Some men perceive the Almighty in themselves by meditation, through pure intellect; while some through knowledge and some through action. Some who are ignorant learn this knowledge through others and worship as they have learnt; even these earnest students cross this mundane ocean.

Realisation of difference between Kshetram and Kshetrajna leads to Brahman

Whatever movable and immovable is created is due to the combination of the field and the knower of the field. Since the Lord resides in all beings, the person who knows this sees Him equally in these beings; he sees the indestructible in all things that perish; his vision is real spiritual vision of Truth and Reality. Such a sage (seer) does not perish in the spiritual sense, as he sees with a balanced mind; he achieves perfection. The man who sees all actions only as a course of nature and sees the soul as the non-doer sees correctly. All action is born of nature. When he realises that all this variety rests in One, he becomes one with this Brahman, the Almighty. This imperishable almighty, without a beginning, without attributes, though dwelling in the body, in fact, does not do anything and is not contaminated by anything. Just as the sky, pervading everywhere, remains untarnished by anything owing to its subtleness, the soul is not contaminated even though residing in bodies. Just as the sun, the only one sun illumines the whole universe, the soul illumines all nature (field). It follows that the supreme soul illumines the whole of nature. He who perceives with the eye of knowledge, the difference between the field and the knower of the field knows how salvation is achieved and reaches the Supreme Being.

Summary of Chapter

It is made clear here that real salvation is release from nature or the mortal coils. The Lord identifies the field

with nature, the corporal body with feelings, prakriti with gunas. All actions stem from nature. The field has to be cultivated by mental discipline. The knower of the field is called Kshetrajna, the soul supreme, also Purusha, Brahman, Akshara. This Purusha is actionless and self-sufficient. True knowledge of the Field and the knower of the field leads to emancipation. This emancipation is freedom from birth and death; it is immortality, merging in the Supreme. To achieve this end, the yogas (disciplines) of meditation, discrimination, action and devotion are prescribed.

CHAPTER XIV

THE YOGA OF THE CLASSIFICATION OF THREE GUNAS

Word "Brahma" in this chapter — God the Father of all beings — Sattva Rajas Tamas how they act — Arjuna asks Lakshana of Gunatheetha — Krishna lists 12 qualities — Summary of Chapter.

Word "Brahma" in this chapter

Brahman has different meanings. Generally it means the formless, Supreme Soul. In verses 3 and 4 of this chapter, the word is used in the sense of "Nature", the mundane world, with its three attributes, Elsewhere in the Gita, the word connotes the Supreme Soul.

God the Father of all beings

The Lord tells Arjuna that he will now impart to him once again the supreme wisdom among all wisdoms; acquiring this wisdom, all sages have attained the highest perfection, being liberated from mundane existence. Benefiting from this wisdom, they have entered into the Lord's Being; they are not born again at the beginning of the creation; nor are they perturbed at the destruction of the world. The great Brahman or Nature comes from God; it is the source of all beings; God sows His seed in

nature and all beings are created. Thus God is the father of all beings.

Sattva Rajas Tamas how they act

The three qualities of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas, arising from nature tie up the soul in the body. These are inherent in every being, in different degrees. Among these, the quality of Sattva (being pure) lights up the intellect; it is free from vices but still binds the soul by association with pleasures and knowledge. The quality of *Rajas* is in the form of passions and is born of desires and attachments. It binds the soul with actions. The quality of *tamas* creates delusions in beings and is the source of ignorance. It binds the soul with indolence, lethargy and sleep. Sattva gives happiness. Rajas prompts activity and Tamas leads to ignorance and dullness. In some beings, sattva is predominant suppressing Rajas and Tamas; in some Rajas advances brushing aside Sattva and Tamas; in others, Tamas is supreme, suppressing the other two gunas. When in the inner mind, knowledge and discernment appear, Sattva should be taken as having advanced. When Rajas dominates, greed, activities, selfish actions, restlessness and desires for pleasure are generated. Darkness, inactivity, indolence and delusions advance when Tamas is in the ascendance. When the man of Sattva faces death, he attains the faultless world of the men of noble deeds. By death in Rajas, a man's consequent birth would be in the world of people of actions; after death in Tamas, one is reborn among stupid creatures. It is said that the fruits of Sattvika deeds are good and pure; the fruits of the Rajasa deeds are miseries and those of Tamasa deeds are ignorance. Sattva creates knowledge. Rajas creates greed and Tamas creates indolence, delusions and ignorance. Those with Sattva qualities rise to higher levels (heaven); those with Rajas remain in the world of human beings; those with Tamas sink to the lowest depths. When the aspirant of knowledge realises that there is nothing else but those three qualities which cause action and that the Atman is above

these qualities, then he attains the Supreme Being. He will have transcended these qualities of the mortal body and become free from births, deaths, old age and miseries; he will experience bliss in the form of immortality.

Arjuna asks Lakshana of Gunatheetha

Now Arjuna poses a question and wants to know the marks of one who is above the three qualities, how he behaves, and what is the way to rise above them.

Krishna lists 12 qualities

The Lord explains that one (1) who neither rejoices at the presence nor grieves at the absence of Sattva Rajas Tamas; (2) who remains unconcerned and is not moved by these gunas, and who knows that only the gunas operate and remains firm and unperturbed; (3) who does not vacilate from the knowledge of his true self; (4) who takes in his stride happiness and misery; (5) who always retains his equanimity; (6) who considers a clod of earth, stone and gold as equal in value; (7) who behaves alike in that which is dear and that which is not dear; (8) who is Dhira — spiritually wise and firm; (9) who ignores praise and insult; (10) who is equal unto friends and foes; (11) who is free from the ego of doership in all activities; (12) he who constantly worships the Lord by the yoga of exclusive devotion becomes eligible for attainment of Brahman by being above the three qualities. Lord Krishna then identifies Himself as the abode of the Brahman, the immortal, the immutable source of eternal law (*dharma*) and absolute bliss.

Summary of Chapter

It will thus be clear that one who has complete mastery over himself will be above the three gunas; he becomes free of illusions, works without attachment and at last joined to the Supreme being. The three qualities are creations of desire and cravings of the mind. The greater

the realisation of the Supreme Brahman, the lesser the attachment to these qualities and the fully realised sage will have passed beyond the three gunas.

After praising the importance of true knowledge the Lord explains how the world evolved by the junction of Purusha with Prakriti. Then He enumerates the qualities of the three attributes of nature. It is nature that works; the soul is unconcerned. The marks of the man who has transcended the gunas are described, and the Lord ends the chapter by advising the aspirant to go beyond the three gunas, to devote himself unreservedly to Bhaktiyoga and attain immortality.

CHAPTER XV

THE YOGA OF THE SUPREME PERSON (PURUSHOTTAMA YOGA)

The Asvatha tree of Samsara — Nature of tree — Tree should be cut — Vairagya axe — Adhikari or person qualified — Non return goal described — How the soul transmigrates — Yoga the means — Immenance of God — Worship of Purushottama — Prakriti is eternal in one sense and non-eternal in another.

The Asvatha tree of Samsara

The Universe is compared to the Asvatha tree, with its roots above, proceeding from God; its branches below are grounded on nature. This tree is eternal. The leaves are the Vedas. One who knows this tree thoroughly is the real knower.

Nature of tree

Below and above are spread the branches of this tree of life; these are nourished by the three gunas; sense-objects are its buds. This tree also has some roots in the soil; they are the results of actions performed in this world of human beings. These bind men to this world and actions. This tree has no stable form of a existence and

is changeable. One cannot form a correct picture of this tree (universe) because it is always in a state of flux — One does not know its beginning, its end or stability.

Tree should be cut

Later on this chapter will make clear that these three things, universe (or nature), the individual souls and the supreme soul are eternal; the first two issue from the third, the supreme soul; the universe or prakriti undergoes changes and the individual soul or atman is born again and again. Like the trees rooted in the soil, man is rooted in the world by his past actions. The Lord now calls upon the disciple to cut away this metaphorical tree of worldly life.

Vairagya axe

The sharp instrument of non-attachment should be used to cut down this deep-rooted tree. The disciple should then seek the permanent abode in Brahman, whence souls do not return to the mortal world of births and deaths. For achieving this supreme goal one should seek refuge with that Primal Person the Almighty from whom this endless world has extended.

Adhikari or person qualified for it

The competence of those aspiring for release is now explained. They should be free from pride and delusion; they should have conquered the evil of attachments; they remain constantly contemplating the real self; they have calmed their desires; they are above the dual conflicts of happiness and miseries — Only such devotees reach the imperishable goal.

Non-return goal described

The nature of the supreme goal is described. It is not illumined by the sun, moon or fire. This would mean that it is self-luminant. Those who go there do not return to the earth.

How the Soul transmigrates

The individual soul is defined as being a particle of the Supreme Soul; it attracts to itself the five senses and the mind which is the sixth sense. This eternal position of God has come down in the world of beings, ruled by nature's laws. These senses, the departing and incoming soul brings when acquiring a new body, just as the wind carries the smell of things around it. This means that the soul assumes the physical organs of hearing, seeing, tasting, smelling, touching, and thinking in the new body. It then enjoys the desires of the senses. The soul enjoined with the three gunas experiences senses and departs from the body. This process is not perceived by the ignorant. Only wise men can discern this process.

Yoga the means

How to obtain this wisdom is narrated. People should engage in yoga and strive continuously. Only such people will perceive this celestial spark in their bodies; others, though they strive will not succeed, because their hearts are not pure and they strive in the wrong ways. Yoga is the correct method.

Immanence of God

The immanence of the Lord in all things should be realised. It is the brightness of the sun, which illuminates the world; it is in the glow of the moon and fire; it is in the earth supporting all beings; it is in the balmy sapidity of the moon which nourishes plants. The Lord within digests the four forms of the food ingested by drinking, chewing, sucking, and licking through the inner warmth in the stomach, helped by inhalation and exhalation. He dwells in the hearts of all and by His power are memory, intellect and their absence felt. He is the one who can be known through the Vedas; He alone is the author of the Vedas; He alone knows full well their meaning.

Worship of Purushotthama

In this world these are two main entities; the perishable and the imperishable. All beings are perishable and the souls in them are imperishable. Besides these two, there is the third entity, the Supreme Person (*Purushottama*). He is the highest self, the indestructible Lord, who pervades and sustains the three worlds. He is above the perishable and beyond the imperishable; therefore the world and the Vedas know Him as Purushottama, the supreme soul. One who is free from delusions, and knows the Lord in the form of Purushottama, knows everything worth knowing. He therefore devotes himself exclusively to Him, with all his heart. The Lord calls this a secret science, because it is art of yoga, long forgotten. It is taught now to Arjuna because he is sinless; Krishna blesses him to strive after becoming enlightened with this knowledge.

This is the philosophy of the one and only one God, from whom all things emerge and into whom they merge. The real achievement is to know Him as stationed in oneself and in all beings. All actions have results which bind the soul; it has to assume a body to bear out these effects. The only way to stop this ingress and egress of the soul is to devote oneself to Him and thus obtain immortality.

Prakriti is Eternal in one sense and non-eternal in another

Prakriti or Nature is called Eternal in one place and perishable in another. Life by itself is continuous; individual lives appear and disappear; but nature continues to exist.

CHAPTER XVI

THE YOGA OF DISCRIMINATION BETWEEN THE DIVINE AND DEVILISH PROPENSITIES

Daiva and Asura Sampathi — Asura Sampath — Asura Sampath men hate God within them and others — Follow injunctions in scriptures regarding your duties — Summary of Chapter.

Daiva and Asura Sampathi

The Lord now proceeds to describe the divine and demon — like natures of human beings. Fearlessness, purity of heart, delving deep in knowledge, engaging in activity (*yoga*), charity, restraint over senses, worship, introspective self-education, penance, uprightness, non-violence, truth, absence of anger, renunciation of fruit of actions, peacefulness, non-maligning, kindness towards living beings, non-attachment, forgiveness, patience, purity, absence from hatred, abandonment of pride are the virtues of one with a divine nature. Hypocrisy, ego, pride, anger, harshness and ignorance are the qualities of a fiendish person. Divine tendencies lead to salvation, while demoniac tendencies lead to bondage (of the world). The Lord assures Arjuna that he is born with divine traits and therefore he should not grieve. He further asserts that in this world, there are two kinds of beings, divine and demoniacal. He has already described the divine type in

detail; He now proceeds to specify the other type, and describe the damnation it deserves.

Asura Sampath

Fiendish people do not know which activities should be pursued and which not. They do not possess holiness, good conduct or truth. They profess that this world is false, without moral basis and without God, that it is created without a cause (or without any relation to actions and reactions) and therefore that it has no other purpose than to indulge in sensual pleasures. These unredeemed souls, without wisdom or discretion, hold to their narrow views and are its enemies; they are engaged in ruining the world by evil deeds. Puffed up with pride; hypocrisy and arrogance, they indulge in insatiable desires, stick to wrong ideas owing to delusions and are engaged in sinful acts. Beset with endless cares which end only in death; they believe that their summum bonum in life is enjoyment of desires and pleasures, and therefore indulge in them. Bound by hundreds of wishful ties and engrossed in lust and anger, they try to hoard wealth by unjust means in order to indulge in sensual enjoyment. A person of this type would say, "I have obtained this today; I will achieve that ambition. I have this much wealth and will achieve more. I have killed this enemy and will kill others too. I am a Lord. I will enjoy; I am perfect; I am powerful; I am happy. I am rich. I come from a noble family. Who is equal to me? I will perform religious sacrifices; I shall give in charity; I shall rejoice."

Asura Sampath men hate God within them and others

Here the Lord objects to ostentatious display of devotion and charity. He continues, "Thus misled by arrogance, ignorance and delusion, with mind bewildered by fancies, encaged by allurements, extremely engrossed in sensual enjoyment, these fiendish people fall into the foulest hell. These arrogant persons, given over to egoism, puffed with wealth and honours, worship the Lord for show by nominal sacrifices bereft of proper rites. Full of

power, ego, arrogance, lust and anger they hate Me, who dwells in their own hearts and those of others. Thus they are inimical to themselves and others."

Follow injunctions in Scriptures as regarding your duties

Their end is very bad. The Lord throws such jealous, cruel and evil men into hateful births. These foolish men will not attain the Lord; they will be born again and again; a worse fate awaits them; they will descend to lower conditions in future lives. Lust, anger and greed constitute the three doors of hell; therefore one should avoid this triple sin. On who is free from all this sin works for the elevation and welfare of the soul and attain the supreme goal. One who violates the injunctions of the scriptures and behaves wantonly does not achieve happiness, perfection and salvation. Therefore only the scriptures should be one's guide in deciding what should and should not be done; and it is proper to follow the course of action enjoined by the scriptures.

Summary of Chapter

This yoga teaches how to discriminate between good and evil people. Good and bad actions bring to bear their consequences on future lives. The good are blessed and the bad are cursed; the one is devoted to God and the other flouts Him. Those with Daivic (godly) natures will approach the Lord and those with fiendish natures will suffer in the world. Therefore one should follow the moral law laid down in the scriptures.

CHAPTER XVII

THE YOGA OF THE THREE-FOLD FAITH

Arjuna's question — Faith and worship Satvic Rajasic and Tamasic — Tamasic penance — Food of 3 kinds — 3 kinds of Sacrifice — Tapas of 3 kinds — Charity of 3 kinds — Om Tat Sat designate Brahman — Summary of Chapter.

Arjuna's question

Here Arjuna asks a penetrating question: "Would faith alone compensate for the abandonment of scriptural injunctions? Is such a worship with faith, but without rites, Sattvika, Rajasa or Tamasa?"

Faith and worship Sattvic Rajasic and Tamasic

The Lord replies that man has a faith in keeping with his inherent trends; it can be pure, passionate or passive. Faith maketh the man. One is faithful to one's nature according to one's faith. Those endowed with *Sattva* worship gods; those with the quality of *Rajas* worship *yakshas* and demons, the remaining believing in *Tamas*, worship spirits and ghosts.

The Lord thus indirectly hints that faith as such would have to be qualified as good, middling and bad. Those of the first category are rare. The rest are fully described hereafter.

Tamasic penance

Such of the people as are full of hypocrisy and pride and are impelled by desires practise severe penance; such penances are not sanctioned by the scriptures; they unnecessarily torment the five elements of the body and also Me, who resides in the body; this is sheer stupidity. Believe them as having demoniac convictions.

Food of three kinds

The Lord now categorises food, sacrifices, penance and charity, according to the triple classification applied to human tendencies. The *Sattvika* people like foods which promote life, purity, strength, health and happiness; they take foods which are savoury, sweet, bland and substantial. Foods which are bitter, sour, very hot, pungent, dry and burning and which give rise to pain, grief and diseases are dear to those with qualities of *Rajas*. People with *Tamasa* nature, love foods which are stale, polluted, stinking, tasteless and impure.

Three Kinds of Sacrifice

In like manner, sacrifices performed without craving for the fruits thereof, in a spirit of duty, are *Sattvika*. Sacrifices performed with expectation of reward, even heavenly reward, or for ostentation, are *Rajasa*. Those not sanctioned by scriptures, without distribution of food, without the chanting of sacred formulae, without distribution of alms, without faith, are *Tamasa*.

Tapas (Worship) of three Kinds

The worship of gods, the twice - born (brahmin), the preceptors and learned men is austerity of the body; it includes purity, uprightness, celibacy and non-violence. Speech which does not provoke, which is truthful, beneficial and pleasant, which exudes deep study and recitation of sacred texts, is the austerity of speech. Cheerfulness, serenity of outlook, silence, self-control, purity of purpose, and faith are the austerities of the mind. Thus will

the pious man worship God with body, speech and mind. This three-fold austerity practised by people, with utmost faith, without desires for rewards, is *Sattvika*. The austerity which is performed for show, for gaining respect, honour and reverence is *Rajasika*; it is unstable and does not yield permanent benefit. The austerity which is performed with foolish stupidity and obstinacy, by torturing the mind, speech and body, with a view to doing ill to another is *Tamasika*.

Charity of three kinds

The charity done with a sense of duty, without expectation of return, at the right place, to the right person and at the right time is *Sattvika* charity. But that which is given with expectation of reward or of greatful return, which is given with reluctance is *Rajasa* charity. The charity which is given without respect, with hate, at the wrong time, to the wrong person, at the wrong place is *Tamasa*.

Om Tat Sat designate Brahman

The importance of chanting the proper words in meditation is now made clear. This is the prayer by speech. "Om Tat, Sat," is the triple designation of Brahman. The Brahman Himself ordained the use of the Brahmanas, Vedas and Yajnas. The Brahmana books prescribe a procedure for sacrifices, and the Vedas prescribe the hymns to be chanted; *yajna* means sacrifices or offerings made to God through fire or any other method prescribed in Chapter IV. "Therefore worshippers of the Brahman initiate scriptural sacrifices, charity and penance with the citation of "Om". This is done by those who want to realise the Brahman. "The word "Tat" means that all that exists is Brahman alone. Believing this, the seekers after emancipation chant this word and perform sacrifices, austerities and charity, without aiming at rewards. "Sat" is the divine designation of Reality. It is also used in the sense of goodness. It is uttered before performing an auspicious act. To remain firm in sacrifices, penance and

charity is also said to be "sat". Sacrifices, penance and charity when performed, without faith are called "Asat" or "non-asat"; they do not bestow bliss or benefit in this world or the next.

Summary of Chapter

Great importance is given to faith. It is of three kinds, good, worldly, and fiendish. Similarly there are three kinds of food, worship, austerity and gifts. One must eat good food and undertake worship and austerity without thinking of worldly benefits. One should donate willingly, in proper time and place to the proper person. The value of *Nada Brahma* or God of sound (worship by voice) by uttering Om, Tat and Sat is explained.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE YOGA OF SALVATION AND RELINQUISHMENT

Arjuna wants words Sanyasa and Tyaga to be explained — What should be done and what abandoned — Perform work but with detachment — Rewards good evil and mixed — 5 constituents of action — 3 bases of action — Knowledge of 3 kinds — Action of 3 kinds — Doer of 3 kinds — Buddhi of 3 kinds — Dhriti or Fortitude of 3 kinds — Happiness of 3 kinds — The fourfold division of men by natural qualities — Main teaching of Gita (18-46); Worship God by performing your duty; that is man's goal in life; you will gain salvation thereby — Svadharma is preferable, Paradharma is fraught with danger — Unselfish work is Sanyasa — A wise man is in Brahman though performing avocations — Brahmi life to be attained in this life only — Krishna's final advise — Your refusal to fight is out of delusion, your duty is to fight — Krishna leaves choice to Arjuna — Krishna's concluding advice (18-65, 66) Phala Sruthi — Arjuna's final determination — My doubts have vanished I will fight as the soldier of God — Krishna and Arjuna ever present before mental eye — Summary of Chapter.

Arjuna wants words Sanyasa and Tyaga to be explained

Arjuna is by this time overwhelmed by the various preachings of the Lord and addresses Him with his epithets and requests Him to describe the essence of renunciation (*sanyasa*) and relinquishment (*tyaga*) separately.

What should be done and what abandoned

The Lord says that wise men call the abandonment of selfish actions renunciation (*sanyasa*) and the relinquishment of fruits of all actions as relinquishment (*tyaga*). Some learned men say that every action is fraught with faults; and that therefore man should not work; others say that work in the form of sacrifice; charity and penance should not be avoided. The Lord now gives his decided opinion about relinquishment (*tyaga*). This tyaga is of three kinds:— Actions in the form of sacrifice (*yajna*), charity and penance should not be abandoned. In fact, they deserve to be performed because they are purificatory. It should however be borne in mind that it is not proper to abandon the actions which are cast upon us as duties in life. If by ignorance, we abandon them too, it is *Tamasika*. The abandonment because of discomfort and distress is *Rajas;* one who gives up like this does not derive the benefit of abandonment (*tyaga*).

Obligatory work should be done because it ought to be done; the abandonment of the desire and fruit of this work is *Sattvika* or pure. An intelligent, pure relinquisher of this type is free from doubts and does not grumble at difficult work and does not adhere to easier one. It is not possible for one, while in this material body, to give up all actions. Therefore one who abandons attachment of the fruits of actions is a real renouncer or *tyagi*.

Perform work but with detachment

Many people looking at the seamy side of things tend to develop a negative attitude towards life and work. The Lord here advises that real *tyaga* and *sanyasa* mean work

with detachment. As long as we live, we have to work; work one must, advises the Lord, but in a spirit of renunciation.

Rewards good evil and mixed

Good rewards, evil rewards and mixed rewards are the three types of fruits of actions. Those who desire rewards will attain them hereafter, in the next life. But that is not for sages who renounce all rewards.

5 constituents of action

The Lord now defines the constituents of action. "In Sankhya philosophy five contributory causes in the context of actions have been mentioned. They are, respectively, the place, the person, different kinds of means or instruments, various sorts of functions and fifthly, destiny. These are the five causes involved in whatever man does, with his body, speech or mind whether good or evil.

Thus does the Lord give a minor place to fate, to which many people attach undue importance.

3 bases of action

In spite of so many factors coming into play in a single action, the ignorant man thinks that he alone has done the work and claims credit for it, but he is not aware of the reality. On the other hand, whose mind is not tainted by pride, even if he kills all these soldiers knows that he does not really kill, that he is not responsible for the killing and is not bound by the result (sin) of killing. The knower, the knowledge and the object of knowledge are the three incentives to action; and the basis of action is compounded of the doer, organs and the doing.

Knowledge of 3 kinds

Knowledge, action and the doer are said to be of three kinds owing to differences in their qualities; these are enumerated in the Sankhya scripture. The knowledge by which a person can perceive the imperishable single

Entity in all different beings, the Indivisible divided into various forms is *Sattvika.* The knowledge by which a person sees manifold varieties in various beings, is *Rajasa.* He does not realise that the one is behind the many. While the knowledge which mistakes a part for the whole is *Tamasika*; it is not aware of the principle and reason of an individual action; it thinks not of its truth or importance, it thinks of it as trivial.

Action of three kinds

That action which is assigned as duty, and is done without passion or prejudice, attachment or desire for reward is *Sattvika.* The action which a man does for reward, with great labour and with a proud sense of doership is *Rajasa.* A *Tamasika* action is one which is initiated by a person through delusion and ignorance, without thought of his limitations and its consequences, involving waste and violence.

Does of three kinds

The doer, free from attachments, pride and boasting who is full of patience and zeal and who is indifferent to success or failure, is *Sattvika.* The doer who is filled with attachments, keenly desirous of the fruits of his actions, greedy, cruel and impure in purpose and moved by joy and sorrow is *rajasa.* The doer, who is irregular, vulgar, ignorant, arrogant, obstinate, malicious, deceitful, idle, despondent and procrastinating is *tamasika.*

Buddhi of three kinds

The Lord now proceeds to describe in detail, the three-fold distinction, owing to their qualities of intellect (*buddhi*) and fortitude (*dhriti*). That intellect which understands right action and cessation of action (when to do and when not), what is worth doing and what is not, fear and fearlessness, bondage and liberations is *Sattvika.* The intellect by which one cannot know properly what is sacred duty and what is not, what must be done and what

not, is *Rajasa*. The intellect, which is enveloped by ignorance, mistakes improper duty as proper, misconstrues the profane for the sacred, and has a perverted outlook on all objects is *Tamasika*.

Dhriti or Fortitude of three kinds

That fortitude or patience by which one controls the activities of the mind, the soul and the senses through yoga is *Sattvika*. That by which people who are desirous of rewards perform their duties, fulfil their desires and gain prosperity is *Rajasa*, fortitude. That fortitude by which stupid people do not give up sleep, fear, grief, despondency and obstinacy is *Tamasika*.

Happiness of three kinds

Now the Lord proceeds to describe the three kinds of happiness. That which a man comes to enjoy by long practice and achieves at the last the end of miseries, that which at first is like poison but is like nectar at the end, and which emanates from knowledge of the soul is pure (*Sattvika*) joy. That happiness which is created by contact of the senses with their objects, which is sweet in the beginning but bitter at the end is sensual (*Rajasa*). That happiness which creates delusions in the beginning and end, arising from sleep, indolence and lethargy is (*Tamasika*) born of ignorance.

There is none on earth, in heaven, or among the celestial worlds, who is free from these three qualities which are born of nature.

The fourfold division of men by natural qualities

The Lord now emphasises the need for following duties assigned to each class of human beings to attain perfection by engaging in them. Society is divided into four main classes of Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (warriors), Vaishyas (agriculturists and businessmen) and Shudras (servants). Men are so classified according to their inherent qualities and the work they do. This means

caste is not formed by birth. Control of mind, austerity, penance, holiness, forgiveness, uprightness, general knowledge and specialised knowledge, faith in the Almighty are the marks of the Brahmins. Chivalry, lordliness, splendour, firmness, dexterity, refusal to shun the battlefield and charity are the natural duties of the Kshatriyas. Cultivation, protection of cows and trade are the natural duties of the Vaishyas. Servitude is the natural duty of the Shudras. One devoted to one's own natural duties attains the highest perfection.

Main teaching of Gita (18-46) — Worship God by performing your duty; that is man's goal in life; you will gain salvation thereby

The Lord now explains how one devoted to one's duties, attains perfection or salvation. By performing his own duties man worships God, from whom all things have evolved and by whom these things are pervaded. This adoration by work leads to salvation. Work is worship. This is the main reality to be gleaned from the Gita.

Svadharma is preferable, Paradharma is fraught with danger

The Lord preaches against shirking from these duties even if they are not palatable. He says even if the duties assigned to others appear easier compared to one's own duties, and more remunerative, one should engage in one's own duties, even at the risk of death. Duties assigned to others portend fear; they may contain unknown defects and dangers. One's own duty, in keeping with one's inborn proclivity, though difficult, should not be abandoned. All work starts with difficulties, like fire issuing out of smoke.

Unselfish work is Sanyasa

The Lord now explains that unselfish work is really renunciation (*Sanyasa*). He, whose intellect has become free from attachments and allurements from all sides,

who has controlled the mind and the senses, who does not thirst after desires, and enjoyments, such a person when he engages in activities, devoid of ambition, achieves perfect salvation in the form of liberation from the bindings of actions. Then he attains perfection. On attaining it he realises Brahman the supreme; that is the consummation of knowledge.

A wise man is in Brahman though performing avocations

The marks which distinguish such a man are given in detail. Such a saint, endowed with pure intellect pursues his own course firmly; he ignores sights, sounds and other attractions; he dislikes them; later he abandons even likes and dislikes, controls his speech, his body and mind by moderation in food, living in loneliness; he is constantly engrossed in the meditation of the Lord; he assumes non-attachment to worldly affairs; is free from delusions; achieves peace by abandoning egoism, pride, power, desires, anger and covetousness; thus he becomes fit to attain the state of Brahman. That person having attained this state, becomes serene; does not crave or grieve for anything; he looks with impartiality on all beings and attains supreme devotion to the Lord. Through this devotion, he appropriately knows what he is and what the Lord is; and by knowing the Lord in essence, becomes one with the Almighty. Such a person engrossed in the Lord attains the imperishable eternal abode through His grace, even though engaged in performing all his normal avocations.

Brahmi Life to be attained in this life only

This state, suggested in the last verse of Chapter II as *Brahmi*, is to be attained in this life only. The Lord asks Arjuna to be always mentally with the Lord, be dedicating all work to Him and be taking refuge in Him. Then the Lord will shower His grace on the devotee, who will then obtain the eternal abode, after overcoming all obstacles.

Krishna's final advise — your refusal to fight is out of delusion, your duty is to fight

But if he does not heed these precepts because of pride, he will perish. The Lord points out to Arjuna that his refusal to fight was prompted by ego. This refusal is vain; because Arjuna's nature itself will force him into action. Here the Lord makes an important distinction between (1) the natural duty dedicated by one's own character which is shaped by past actions and (2) temptation to abstain from such duty owing to delusion. He points out to Arjuna that he is bound by his past deeds to perform the action, which he, at the present time, does not wish to do, owing to delusion; he is ultimately bound to do by force of circumstances inspired by his better nature. This dual between delusion and duty is clearly brought out here. God, who confuses all beings by his *maya* (illusion or enchantment) dwells in the heart of all beings. Therefore, Arjuna is now advised to get over this *maya* and surrender to the Almighty, with all feelings and faith; by His grace he will attain the highest peace and the supreme state of salvation.

Krishna leaves choice to Arjuna

The Lord informs Arjuna that He has thus far preached the most secret knowledge; he should ponder over it and do what he desires. Here we find the true tolerance which is ingrained in our culture. Knowledge is secret because it is to be imparted only to the deserving; and those who receive this knowledge should think deeply before accepting it and acting on it.

Krishna's concluding advise (18-65, 66)

The Lord now says that He will tell him something very profound and blissful. It is the message of the surrender to the Lord. This is taught to Arjuna because he is extremely dear to Him and has an unwavering mind. He should fix his mind on God and be devoted to Him, bow to Him and worship Him. And so doing Arjuna will attain

Him only. The Lord makes this promise because Arjuna is dear to Him. He further advises that Arjuna should leave all other Dharmas and seek refuge in Him. The Lord will absolve him of all sins. He should not grieve.

Phala Sruthi

The Lord then winds up His divine message by telling Arjuna to preach His teachings but only to those who are competent to receive. Arjuna should not impart the knowledge in the Gita to one who is devoid of austerity or devotion, does no service, is reluctant to hear it, or speaks ill of God. The best devotion to the Lord is to spread His message to those who have faith in the Lord. Doubtless such an apostle will, among all human beings, render the best services to the Lord and none will be dearer to the Lord than such a devotee. The Lord promises that such a devotee will be one with Him. Moreover, one who recites and studies this sacred dialogue, between Arjuna and the Lord will be performing a sacrifice unto the Lord, in the form of knowledge (This *yajna* of knowledge is declared to be the holiest in Chapter IV). Also one who hears this divine message with faith and without disdain will be relieved of sins; he will attain after death the regions of the righteous.

Arjuna's final determination — My doubts have vanished, I will fight as the soldier of God

The Lord has delivered the divine message to his best disciple; He dwells on the recondite nature of the message which should be preached only to those willing to hear, only to those endowed with devotional learnings. The Lord then asks Arjuna whether he has heard the preaching with a concentrated mind and whether the delusions created in him by ignorance have disappeared. Arjuna replies respectfully that by the grace of the Lord, delusions have disappeared and that he has regained real awareness of the mind and that all his doubts are dissolved; he would now act according to the advice of the Lord.

Krishna and Arjuna ever present before mental eye

The wonderful dialogue between Lord Krishna and Arjuna was heard by Sanjaya who in turn narrated it to Dhritarashtra. Sanjaya says that by the grace of Vyasa Bhagavan, he heard the most wonderful dialogue between the great Krishna and the high-souled Arjuna. Sanjaya recalls with pleasure again and again this fascinating dialogue. When he is reminded of the great form of the Almighty, he is struck with wonder and rejoices exceedingly. Sanjaya firmly believes that wealth, success, godliness and righteousness are present, where Krishna, the Lord of *yoga* and Arjuna, the wielder of the great bow are thought to be present, meaning thereby that the message of the Gita on Yoga brings before the mind's eye the presence of the Lord and His devotee.

Summary of Chapter

In this Chapter, the Lord explains the practical meanings of *sanyasa* and *tyaga;* renunciation would be of no avail, without faith in God and without non-attachment. All action depends on five factors, only one of which is the doer; hence he should not boast. The three attributes of nature prod man to action. *Karma yoga* or dedication to duty is real renunciation, when action is done without attachments. All actions should be dedicated to God, in humble spirit. The Lord outlines the aims in action and duties to be performed in this world. The meaning of *varnas* is made clear; potentialities are to be utilised with due regard to natural tendencies. Only those who are phychologically fit for their work should engage in them. This is called *swadharma*. The last message is of surrender to God. The Lord then gives the freedom to Arjuna to accept His message or reject it. On Arjuna's acceptance, the Lord enjoins him to spread His message, but only to those who are competent to accept it. There will always be a class of men to appreciate, accept and abide by this message.

CONCLUDING NOTES

Man should utilise his God-given Buddhi — To understand Laws of Nature, mind must be free from delusions — Delusions of Senses — Uncertainties of life and future — Life shall be soul oriented and nor body oriented — Actions should be done as sacrifices — Asvatha tree of Samsara should be cut by axe of Vairagya — Material Development alone is deceptive — Discipline and pure knowledge necessary — Past Karma, Time and God factors to be taken into account — Action should not be impelled by senses but dedicated to God — Visvarupa Dharsanam possible — Bhakta Lakshana — Asura Lakshana — Soul exists apart form body, Gita teaches truths — Man should leave world better — Krishna set example of a perfect life — Devotion to God the Summum Bonum.

Man should utilise his God-given Buddhi

What is this universe? It is something huge where man is incidental like other beings and objects. But because man has a sense of discernment he can think beyond what other beings can. Nevertheless each one is a part of the great institution and should naturally have the particles common for all; consistent with the law which governs the great universe. Discussions about it is possible only among human beings and the greater the approach of the mind to this great vista of knowledge and understanding, the greater the gulf between man and other living beings who cannot think and cannot understand. In other words human beings who do not apply their mind to this great knowledge remain as mute as non-human creations.

To understand Laws of Nature, mind must be free from delusions

Then what is that great law? As we see it, it is not on a random path because from a seed of rice only rice is grown, water always flows down, fire always burns, one who is born is sure to die and so on. This is consistent, constant and regular; therefore it should be assumed that it is benevolent in the sense that nature always heals but if something hampers that process, then something has gone awry. To understand this aspect of nature the mind must be free from delusions of the senses.

Delusions of senses

What are delusions of the senses? Basically, the human body is a cluster of perishable materials and it tends to be comfortable and happy. If there is warmth around, a sense of relief arises; if there is something nice in the articles around a desire for possession arises; if there is wealth, a sense of utilising for self or for its hoarding arises; if there is chance for honour it is utilised for self and so on. All this leads to comforts of the body with a mind polluted by the senses. Therefore if the mind is not polluted by the senses, there will be greater realisation that:—

(1) there is something great which we possess (Soul);

(2) there is something great to be achieved or aimed at (karma);

(3) there is some entity which is very great and truthful (paramatma); and

(4) it is only the angle of vision that perverts thinking and if the same angle has as its basis the appreciation of the supreme to which everything belongs, there will be no narrow selfish aims of pleasures of the senses, anger, greed, malice, etc.

Uncertainties of Life and future

It should always be remembered that the desires of the senses, honour and greed are limited to the material body and even though their aims may be of a long term nature they have no expected functions when the life in the material body ends; except that another body is assumed by the soul in accordance with the aims and objects

of the previous actions. If, however, the aim is realisation of God, even if a fresh body is assumed, there will be further progress. But surely, when the aims are materialistic and selfish, it is not gauranteed that in the new body assumed there will be opportunities for furthering them as one may have thought in the previous life. In fact, the circumstances in the new body will be miseries as a reward for actions previously done, as such actions were contrary to the law of God. The soul in the body, which is one with the supreme soul, is its own judge, and just as water flows downward in its course, the soul's urges flow in a course consistent with the law of nature but inconsistent with what may have been aimed at previously by force of the senses. In other words the soul, clustered by senses and the mind, becomes free and is not lead aways by them as they no longer exist to lead them when life ends. The only thing the soul takes with it is the "Smell" (Vasanas) of the actions to take its place in a new body to suffer or to be rewarded. It is difficult to say when emancipation will be reached in each case even if progress is made, just as we cannot say when a barge drifting in mid-ocean will reach the shore, because of the wind.

Life shall be soul-oriented and not body-oriented

In these circumstances what should one do? One should realise that one's own soul is part of the Almighty and that one should surrender to Him. Religions and rituals, are secondary to that realisation. We should thus have a soul — oriented life and not body — oriented. Then it is possible for a human being, puny as he is, to perceive through the infinite; then the human being does not remain small but becomes great. The world is full of different human beings and it is possible that at some time we may meet a highly realised person amongst us. That man by his actions and deeds equated with God and by dint of the realisations which he has achieved is able to set things in order which others cannot do. Lord Krishna gives various details of perfection and one who is on the right path realises them. The rest are far away due to a reverse way of thinking. The one class relies on the force of the soul and the other on the senses. For example, we actually see what a drunkard thinks about drinking and what a wise person thinks about it. If, however, the body is treated as a "field" and is farmed with

the force of knowledge and not the sense alone, it affords ample opportunities for progress. The field in the form of the human body has basic elements of the senses and inclinations of the mind which drive them. From the senses arise pain and pleasure unless the mind is controlled.

Actions should be done as sacrifices

When the field (*Prakriti*) and knower of the field (*Purusha*) come together in the human body, when true knowledge of this distinction is realised the virtues that will emanate will be actions without the desire of rewards, understanding beyond the scope of the present material body, self-control, understanding the Supreme Being and devotion to Him. It is ordained that whatever actions take place should take place as sacrifices and the fruits thereof should not be expected. There is no bar to enjoying the fruits which must be for all and not for individuals.

Aswatha tree of Samsara should be cut by axe of Vairagya

Truth pervades everywhere and for all time, and there is no place or time without the presence of God. The world is cluster of delusions which are not capable of polluting the Almighty even though He is in everything. He is a master who does not interfere with the working of the great machine of Nature in which the desires of the senses are duly rewarded by formations of material bodies for consequent suffering or pleasures. The working of the great machine is for the good of all in the sense that defaulters are rightly given their due Nevertheless that great process is a healing one and ultimately truth prevails. As described by the Lord (Chapter XV), the universe is a great tree of creation which has its roots in the Supreme Being and branches extending downwards and upwards in the shape of desires binding the soul according to actions. This has no beginning or end and the process goes on. It is essential to understand this tree, namely, that the tree comes from the Supreme Being with the soul and the desires and that it is widely spread. That understanding decides the behaviour and the duties of man. This is the tree of life and should be cut down by the axe of renunciation. One is here reminded of the advice of Jesus to the rich man to divest himself of his possessions to attain the Kingdom of Heaven.

Material Development alone is deceptive

It may be a paradox that the material development is not real as it tends to multiply allurements of the senses and their attachments. It may be felt that material development is for the good of all. But this is misleading because no one can gaurantee that the attachments of the senses in individuals will not be extant for all time to come in the context of ego, pride and power.

Discipline and pure knowledge necessary

Conditions must be created in which each one feels secure while performing one's own duties in life. The Lord preaches tolerance towards all faiths. The Sattvika, Rajasa and Tamasa ways of life have their implications in the life of the world. Therefore to inculcate and propagate for what is best, is absolutely necessary. Discipline and good behaviour can be retained only if there is constant inculcation of the good, because the forces of the senses play mainly on the "field" and if they are allowed to remain unattended they bring pollution. This should be done with the knowledge as described by the Lord. If knowledge is polluted, the "field" is sure to be.

Past Karma, Time and God factors to be taken into account

Our appreciation and understanding of objects should not be limited to the span of the material body alone. We cannot circumvent eternal time and the supremacy of the Almighty together with the law of Karma (result of actions) which functions independently of the present material body. For instance, we do not know who actually are those who are around us, in the context of the great law. Some may be for our good; some may be for the contrary, depending in each case on the dispensations they were supposed to be allotted to according to something which may have happened in the "past". Selection of bad company by a good man may be influenced by actions in his past life. Such selection might be initiated in this life as well. Arjuna did not know that the Kauravas, though they were his cousins, were in fact fit to be killed. The precept therefore is against the delusions of Arjuna. Though Arjuna did not kill them in fact he was bound to kill them — they stood killed in the context of their karma (deeds). They were destined to be destroyed by dint of their karma. Moreover, the Lord was with Arjuna in keeping with His impartial nature.

Action should not be impelled by senses but dedicated to God

A question may arise, while engaged in actions, whether it is more beneficial to remain without actions than to pursue them, because actions may involve unpleasent results. In fact it is difficult to remain without actions. So all work leads to a higher spiritual level if it is free from malice and ego. Action should be dedicated to the Almighty and the mind should remain indifferent to the senses. One who has achieved realisation does not mentally dwell in the senses but is indifferent to their functioning. Similarly, just as the Almighty does not take upon Himself the fruits of the deeds of human beings, one who has the realisation is not bound by the seeds of the senses; the soul of such a person is not clustered by the desires of the mind and the senses. This leads to mental satisfaction. Such a man is constantly one with the Supreme and does not think of anything else. He has no desires for reward or aims to fulfil. He sees everything as equal and he is his own real friend. It need not be repeated that one who has this type of realisation sees no difference between a friend and foe, heat and cold, himself and others and sees the presence of the Almighty everywhere and in all beings. However all this depends on the mind which is flickering and extremely difficult to control. Mind can be controlled by constant observance of discipline and good behaviour. The storing of good deeds of one's previous life towards self-realisation helps in this regard. The concentrated aim of the realisation of the Almighty relieves one from the bonds of births and deaths, even if one may be engaged in actions.

Visvarupa Darsanam possible

God is the source of everything and He is the Supreme Soul. He is the source of all creations and destructions. He guides the destinies and not the senses and desires of human beings, in the great eternal time. He is manifested in innumerable forms. Devotion to Him is absolutely necessary. The divine form shown to Arjuna is possible in the nature of the Almighty and is metaphorical. It conveys possibilities beyond the scope of thinking of ordinary human beings and can be appreciated and understood only by those devoted to the Almighty. Even the study of the highest scriptures may not be able to make one understand this.

Bhakta Lakshana

A real devotee attains the goal by proper understanding and he is dear to Him. The devotee is constantly concentrated in Him and he achieves salvation. The devotee will have the qualities of equality for all, freedom from delusions and pride, satisfaction in all circumstances of miseries and happiness, oneness for gold and a clod of earth, indifference to gains or losses and a mind concentrated and devoted to the Almighty with a belief that He is the doer and the destiny. Such a devotee is dear to Him. The devotee perceives God in all animals and everything else in this universe. God is the Great Person stationed at the helm, pervading the soul and heart of every creature. To realise Him one should be devoid of delusions and believe Him to be the real creator and detroyer. Those who are engaged in the pursuit of perfection will be fearless, pure and charitable.

Asura Lakshana

Those of having wicked tendencies will be hypocritical, arrogant, passionate or ignorant. The former will understand God while the latter will flout His existence. The one will exist for well-being, the other for the fulfilment of desires and pleasures. The fate of the latter is births and re-births accompanied by miseries.

Soul exists apart from body. Gita teaches truths

Generally human beings have three qualities in mixed degrees, namely, Sattva, Rajas and Tamas, as described by Lord Krishna, according to their pure understanding, precipitate action or ignorance, respectively. All human beings differ from one another and very rarely does anyone have full understanding. If one has the delusions of the senses and attachment to worldly affairs, they hamper the actual operation of the understanding. In a way, the understanding cannot be said to be full if the senses hamper them. If there is realisation, the sense objects cannot come in the way. And then, there is no scope for hypocrisy, pride, prejudices, greed, anger and violence. It should be properly understood that all these are limited to the material body and then mind, which is extremely fickle, is required to be controlled. It is a fact that when the material body ends its existence there are no perceptions about relations, joys, selfishness, etc. Therefore it should be appreciated that there is something to be rea-

lised apart from the bodily urges. It should never be assumed that there is nothing beyond. The very smallness of a human being does not gaurantee that there is nothing beyond; because greater souls who were born did realise and preach about the great Beyond. I should shudder at any idea of suggesting that the preaching of the Gita are not truthful.

Man should leave world better

I have no hesitation in saying that in the great eternal time span and flow of the universe, we do not live in the best of worlds. What, then, is the world? It is what man has made of it. And it is only human beings who have the intellect, knowledge and culture, to mould the world one way or the another. Other creatures have no contributions to make. Hence it is our duty to leave the world better than the state in which we found it.

Krishna set example of a perfect life

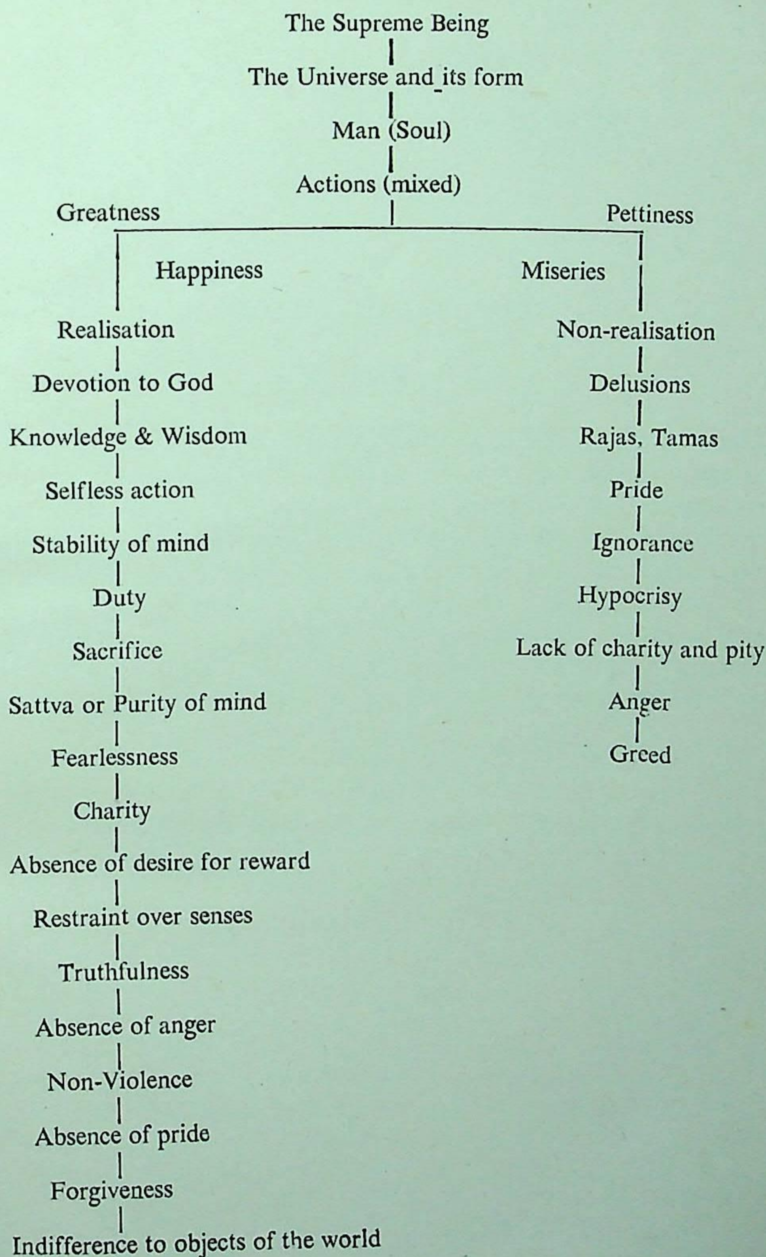
However, it is not the intention to assert that in the concept of eternity human beings did not lead well-realised lives. A human soul tosses in births and re-births like a barge in the ocean flown by the wind. This process goes on for ever, and the great tree of life will spread its branches in the form of desires and senses. Therefore, keeping in constant touch with high ideals and good qualities is necessary to withhold the tendencies and attributes of perverted thinking and actions. The tendencies of Rajas, Tamas, etc., bring in their wake so much ego and other complexities that it is difficult to mend matters. The code of discipline serves the purpose. Therefore respect for those who are experienced and for persons possessing higher qualities is absolutely necessary. The Lord Himself set the example for others to follow.

Devotion to God the Summum Bonum

The glories of the Supreme Being are unparalled. We are small beings incidental to His multifarious activities. It is only the ego within us that leads us to believe that we are greater that what we actually are. This leads to self-centredness and consequent miseries. Are we not turning a heaven into hell with no benefit to ourselves too? We are actively doing this by the force of our senses and the mind. Let there be the best activities and vocations in life, but even superior to these will be our

love for and devotion to the Almighty. There is not joy or satisfaction as great as that created by devotion to Him; then the soul is free either to assume a material body or to merge in Brahman, without burdens or encumberance. Love for Him will generate love for all and everywhere.

GITA — IN A NUT SHELL





PRAYER TO THE LORD

OM TAT SAT

Oh, Lord: You are the Supreme Being, Creator and Feeder of all, just and truthful. We do not know what is blissful for us and therefore we dedicate all our actions to you and pray for our well-being. Kindly save us from spite and untruthfulness and grant us intellect pure and holy good sense and devotion to you. May we love all and work for higher aims without regard to what we materially gain or miss. Kindly be our guide in this eternal time and we pledge to strive to be one with you.

OM

Note:—This prayer may be included in the family or group night prayer.



THE AUTHOR

Born on 22nd November 1914 in Junagadh (Gujarat), Shri Janakrai M. Joshipura took his B.A. degree in Philosophy from the University of Bombay.

A keen student of philosophy, Shri Joshipura has a wide ran of interests in varied subjects, such as law, astrology, music an arts. A social worker of many years standing, he passed the examination of the Rashtrabhasha Prachar Samiti, Wardha, and ly worked for the promotion of our national language, Hindi. serving the Government of Gujarat for a number of years, Shri Jo pura retired as a Dy. Secretary and is presently engaged in propagat spiritual and ethical values for the benefit of the younger generation. A man of simple habits, Shri Joshipura believes in the philosophy of "Plain Living and High Thinking", free from any mental inhibitions.

This treatise of Shri Joshipura on the *Bhagavad Gita,* we trust, will commend itself to all those who believe in the higher values of life. In the context of the growing tendency to pursue individual desires and material gains, it is essential to explain to the common man the valuable vision in life which he is missing. While, on the one hand, the human being is full of potentialities if the urges of the soul are allowed to function, the conditions appear to be that due to pursuit of desires of the senses, man has constricted his understanding of real values by seeking material gains and bodily happiness. This has made him a "dwarf" as against his self in the universe which is full of peace and happiness and fully capable of making this world heavenly. Life should be understood and led in the context of the eternal time as we are all part of a still greater force and it should not be limited to narrow considerations of the human body which is transient and perishable. The book is an attempt to explain it.